MISS POLLY WIGGLES

EDNA CLARK DAVIS

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"Oh, mine's ahead!" cried Marion.—*Page 27.*

MISS POLLY WIGGLES

BY

EDNA CLARK DAVIS

ILLUSTRATED BY

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BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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Miss Polly Wiggles

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To

MY NIECE ELIZABETH

THE ORIGINAL "POLLY WIGGLES"

OF THE STORY

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MISS POLLY WIGGLES

CHAPTER ONE

AT "THE LILACS"

"THE LILACS" was such a pretty place; at least Elizabeth said so, and every one that saw it was likely to agree with her. It was really the country home of Grandmother and Grandfather Carr, and Aunt Elsie, Elizabeth's young-lady aunt, but every summer the Eatons went there, too.

In the first place it was so convenient for Dr. Eaton's practice, and that was the most important consideration, for a doctor had to be able to get to his patients quickly, and The Lilacs was only a half-hour run in the automobile from his city office. Then, too, the children loved it, and both Dr. and Mrs. Eaton believed it good for their little girls to play around in the sweet country air.

Now let me tell you about the Eatons. First there was Dr. Daddy, as the children called him, who was a very busy man, but always ready for a smile, or a romp with his little brood. Then came Mrs. Eaton, who was the prettiest young mother any one could imagine, with big brown eyes that beamed lovingly at her little try-patiences. She was Aunt Elsie's older sister, and Grandmother and Grandfather Carr's big daughter, so you can imagine the good times they all had together.

As for the children, I must first tell you what they called themselves. There were just the three little girls. Jeannette, the eldest, was well past nine and already quite a schoolgirl. Then came Elizabeth, or Polly Wiggles, as every one nearly always called her. Grandfather Carr had given her the nickname, because she was such an active little girl that he declared she was "always on the wiggle," and that the stately name of Elizabeth did not suit her at all. She was nearly as tall as Jeannette, but more than a year younger, and more than four years older than Evelyn, the baby of the family.

And what do you suppose they called themselves? Why, "The Three Bears," to be sure. When they were younger, Mother had read them the famous story many times, and while Evelyn was still a baby it was Elizabeth's fertile brain that thought, "Why, we're three bears ourselves. Jeannette is the great big bear, I'm the middle-sized bear, and Evelyn is the wee little cubby bear." It was a favorite play with the children after that, and Evelyn was called "Cub" and "Cubby" so much, that the name stuck, as many a nickname will, and even Mother and Father called this chubby, roly-poly, golden-curled daughter, "Cubby."

The children were never happier than when at The Lilacs, for they dearly loved their grandparents and Aunt Elsie. Elizabeth was named after Grandmother Carr, and was very proud of the fact, while Jeannette had her mother's name, and Evelyn was the name of Dr. Daddy's mother, or their dear silver-haired Grandmother Eaton, who had a home at the seashore.

Grandmother Carr's hair was as brown as Jeannette's, with scarcely a silver thread in it,

but, as Elizabeth said, "Grandfather's head pushed up through his hair," and all around the sides it was gray.

It was early May, but already the big colonial house had been opened for the season, for Cubby was still coughing from the effects of the whooping-cough, and Dr. Daddy thought it wise to leave the city.

So Jeannette and Elizabeth were taken from their own school and attended the country school at Meadowbrook that was within easy walking-distance of The Lilacs. Jeannette was in the fifth grade and Elizabeth in the fourth, for both little girls were fond of books and well up in their studies. They always took their lunches with them, for the noon period was short, and besides, it was great fun to eat picnic luncheons on the green slope outside the school, especially as their two best playmates were with them.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning. Bees were already busy sipping honey from the flowers that grew in profusion in the old-fashioned gardens, and blue and yellow butterflies paused to kiss the purple and white lilac plumes that

sweetened the air with fragrance and gave the place its name.

Under the apple-trees by the brook that wound its way about the orchard back of The Lilacs, and through the meadows and little woods beyond, there was a great chattering going on that would make any one think that at least a dozen little girls were talking at once, instead of four.

Aunt Elsie, hidden behind a row of purple lilac blossoms, smiled as she pressed closer in her arms the big gray cat she was carrying, and watched the four little girls who were comfortably lying on their stomachs in the green grass, for Elizabeth's and Jeannette's best friends had come over to play.

Alice Maxfield was an only child, and lived next door to The Lilacs in a pretty summer home called "Sweet Briar." She and Elizabeth had been the best of chums since baby days, and Polly Wiggles' thick black curls and Alice's smooth bobbed blonde locks were entwined as together they looked over a new book of fairy-tales. They were both eight, and in the same class at school. Marion West was a year older,

and the same age as Jeannette, but she was such an unusually big girl for her age that she could easily have passed for eleven, and overtopped Jeannette by half a head.

Marion was visiting her grandparents for the summer at their home, called "Blossom Banks," which was farther down the avenue. Her father, Dr. West, was minister in the church the Eatons attended in the city, and he usually spent his summers at Meadowbrook. Both she and Jeannette were busy knitting scarfs for their dolls, and, to judge by the snarl Jeannette's wool was in, it would take Mother or Grandmother many minutes to untangle it.

Aunt Elsie smiled again at the pretty picture the children made in their bright gingham dresses, for the four little girls were four such different types. Maybe that was the reason they got along so well together, for misunderstandings were few and far between, and quarrels almost unknown.

Alice was plump and rosy, with golden hair cut "Dutch," and the bluest of blue eyes. She was a dear little girl, with just enough quietness

in her nature to balance the more mischievous and irrepressible Polly Wiggles. For Wiggles was mischievous. As Daddy said, "If there was any scrape to be gotten into, Wiggles was in."

Such black crinkly curls had Wiggles, hanging just below her shoulders, and her blue eyes fairly danced with the joy of living. Grandfather used to say, with a twinkle in his gray eyes, "You're such a thin wisp of a girl that some day a puff of wind will blow you away," and Wiggles used to laugh at the idea of sailing away over housetops like a dried leaf. For no amount of teasing ever bothered her, which was most fortunate, for they were a fun-loving family, although all teasing was good-natured.

Jeannette had curls, too, long ones, but as Wiggles declared, "They hung down in the way curls should go, and didn't snarl all up like corkscrews." Then, too, Jeannette had brown eyes like Mother, and a great deal of Mother's sweet, calm disposition. She was a thoughtful little girl, and rarely got into the funny scrapes that her active sister did.

Marion, who was clever with her fingers, was really doing creditable work on her doll's scarf that was to match a cunning little sweater her grandmother had made. She was a child who took things earnestly, and had a mass of rippling red hair that hung far below her waist, and was almost too heavy for comfort.

Wiggles was in a pretty pink gingham dress, and Alice had on her favorite blue. Jeannette declared that was why it was called "Alice blue." Jeannette's frock was buff, and Marion's, leaf-green, that contrasted with her glowing mane of hair.

"I wish my hair grew as quickly as yours," said Alice, twisting one of the glowing locks around her finger as she spoke. For Marion's hair was cut to her shoulders regularly each summer, and by the next spring it was long enough to sit on.

"I don't think Mother will cut it this year," replied Marion, "but it does get so warm and prickly-heaty. It's lots more comfortable like yours, Alice."

Alice ruffled her short blonde locks disconsolately. It made no difference how much she mussed herself or disarranged her hair, as, for some mysterious reason, she always looked immaculate, and hair, dresses, and ribbons seemed to fall again into correct folds, no matter how hard she played.

Maybe that was one reason that she and Wiggles were such chums, because the contrast was so great. It was a marvelous feat for Wiggles to arrive home from school intact, for either hair-ribbon or handkerchief would have vanished, or yawning gathers would show where skirt had once joined waist before she had indulged in a few games. Wiggles left each game looking a wreck. Alice was unruffled.

It was a peculiar fact, and one that Wiggles greatly deplored. As Mandy, the colored cook, declared, "Trouble suah flies to dat chile as de spahks fly upwahd."

At the present moment Wiggles' clean pink gingham had grass-stains front and back, of which she was serenely unconscious, and the big

butterfly bow on her hair had slid down to the very tip of one fat black curl, and was rescued from falling off by Marion, who neatly tied it anew.

Aunt Elsie parted the lilac-bushes gently and placed the beautiful gray Persian cat, her special pet and pride, on the grass.

"Now be a good pussy," she whispered into one furry ear, "and take my message."

Just as if he understood each word,—and maybe he did,—Pussy arched his beautiful fluffy tail over his back and picked his way daintily over the violet-strewn grass. Aunt Elsie slipped back behind the concealing bushes and watched his leisurely progress.

"Why, look!" exclaimed Jeannette, "here comes Boots. Here, Boots, Boots!"

"What is that thing around his neck, under his chin?" asked Alice curiously, peering at the beautiful pussy. "Why is he called 'Boots,' Wiggles?"

"'Cause his really-truly name is 'Puss-in-Boots,'" explained Wiggles, teetering on one foot as she spoke. "He is marked with four

white boots on his paws, so we call him Boots, for short. Isn't he a booful angel pussy? There," with a change of tone, "he has something around his neck, sure as can be. Isn't that queer? Wait and I'll see what it is."

With a dart she pounced on the fuzzy Boots, and with much astonishment unfastened a tiny gay green-and-white basket that had been fastened to his collar.

"Oh, my goodness, girls, he's a postman, or postcat!" she squealed, much excited. "Here are four little letters addressed to us in the basket, —one for each of us."

Boots, much relieved to be separated from his "mail-sack," curled down in Jeannette's lap and took cat-naps, while four excited little girls tore open the tiny pink envelopes, and read this invitation:

"You are invited to a dolls' bathing-picnic at ten-thirty this morning at Fleur-de-Lys Point. Bring your little dolls, and dolls' furniture."

Four little girls squealed with pleasure.

"I'll have to ask permission," exclaimed

Marion and Alice in one breath. "Won't it be lovely? What time is it now?"

"It's just ten o'clock," announced Aunt Elsie, appearing beside the little girls, "and I already have asked permission of Marion's grandmother and Alice's mother, so it won't be necessary for you to go home, as you have your dolls with you."

"Oh," squealed Wiggles, "then let's pack and go quick." With a rush she was off to the house, and reappeared a few minutes later with a huge market-basket, into which dolls, furniture, and dishes had been dumped pell-mell. To this she added Jeannette's, Alice's, and Marion's dolls.

Then, led by Aunt Elsie, carrying a big red sunshade, and followed by the faithful Boots, the little party crossed the rustic bridge and walked through the green meadow-grasses along the brook, to the spot near the woods that had been named Fleur-de-Lys Point.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOLLS' BATHING-PICNIC

"WHAT is a dolls' bathing-picnic, Aunt Elsie?" inquired Wiggles curiously. "Our dolls can't swim, you know."

"Wait and see," replied Aunt Elsie mysteriously.

"You do think of the nicest things," said Jeannette, slipping her hand in her aunt's.

Here Wiggles, who had scurried on ahead of the others, came puffing back, her hair in a wild curly mass from heat and perspiration.

"I could just see the Point," she panted breathlessly, "and, what do you think, Auntie? I could see some horrid boys there, so we won't be able to go there after all. Isn't that mean?"

"Ugh! I hate boys," cried Alice. "You can have so much nicer times when there are just girls. I do think all boys ought to live in a

menagerie, they're so fond of bugs, and toads, and horrid things."

"Well," confessed Aunt Elsie, "you see, I invited some boys myself, so I don't doubt but that they are there ahead of us."

"You did? Boys?" echoed Wiggles. "To a dolls' party? Why, Auntie!"

Aunt Elsie laughed again. "They'll only be with us for a little while," she explained. "I asked Marion's brother, Hugh, and your own cousins, Billy and Dick. They won't be so bad, will they?"

"I hope not," replied Jeannette, doubtfully it must be confessed. "They always have to race around and upset and break things so, and make such a noise."

The four little girls walked on together, arms around each other's waists, brown, black, yellow, and red hair mingling.

"I do think boys are disgustable creatures," declared Wiggles, tossing her curls. "No good at all unless you want to go swimming or something."

"I think so, too," declared Marion unexpec-

tedly. "Always pulling my hair and calling me, 'Carrots' and 'Red Head' and 'Ginger.' "

"The idea!" said Jeannette indignantly. "Your hair is perfectly beautiful."

"It's what is called 'Tissue' hair," announced Wiggles with an air of wisdom. "I heard one of the teachers say so, though I can't see why it's called that. It's not a bit like tissue paper."

"Oh, Wiggles!" laughed Jeannette; "you'll certainly kill me. It's 'Titian' hair, not 'Tissue,' and 'Titian' is a Latin or Greek name for 'red,' I think."

"Well," agreed Wiggles serenely, joining in the laughter, "it's a much more 'spressive word than 'red,' anyway."

Fleur-de-Lys Point was well named. There the brook gurgled along over flat stones and tiny pebbles, while masses of purple and white fleur-de-lys clustered about its bank, and even sent up daring shoots of green in the rippling water. The mossy bank was thickly carpeted with violets, and under a huge old willow-tree, that spread its drooping boughs over the crystal waters, the "disgustable" boys were waiting.

Wiggles' cousins, Billy and Dick Gerard, were really very nice, jolly boys, full of spirits and boyishness, and, notwithstanding the little girls' previous remarks, they were very fond of their good-natured cousins. Richard, or Dick as he was called, was ten; and William, who never answered to anything but "Bill," or "Billy," was past twelve. They were both strong, husky lads, with dark hair and eyes like Jeannette's.

Hugh, Marion's brother, was Dick's inseparable pal and bosom crony, and had a head of heavy mahogany-colored hair several shades darker than his sister's.

"If there isn't Polly Wiggles," greeted Billy. "Wiggles, every single hair on your head stands erect."

The four little girls dropped down on the mossy bank, first carefully putting the market-basket, which they had taken turns in carrying, at the gnarled roots of the willow tree.

"Isn't it lovely and shady here?" said Alice with a blissful sigh of content.

"Usually is shady under a tree," teased Dick.

"Goodness," said Marion, wiping her flushed face and trying to hold up her heavy hair away from her neck.

Aunt Elsie secured both Jeannette's and Marion's long locks with hairpins on top of their heads, and the two little girls felt quite grown up.

"Wiggles looks like a Fiji Islander," said Hugh, for every strand corkscrewed out from her head in a mass of short, kinking curls.

"All you need is a ring in your nose," gibed Billy.

"Well," agreed Wiggles unruffled, "if I had a ring, I'd be a 'belle' I s'pose." There was a general shout at this, and Billy pretended to faint away at such brain work in one so young.

Then Aunt Elsie pointed to the willow boughs above them, and, looking up, the little girls spied four small bundles, tied to the branches within easy reach of their eager hands, and each package was marked with a little girl's name.

"More s'prises," beamed Wiggles. "I just love s'prises. Oh!" with a shriek of joy; "just

see what I have," and she held aloft the dearest little celluloid doll, dressed in a brilliant scarlet bathing-suit.

"And mine," echoed Jeannette, holding up a blue-clad bather. Alice and Marion had the same, but Marion's doll wore a green suit, and Alice's a purple.

"Now," said Aunt Elsie briskly, "we will have a swimming contest for the four doll-ladies."

Seeing the girls' look of surprise, the boys shouted.

"Celluloid floats, you know," Dick explained to the girls at large. "What's the matter? Are you afraid they'll spoil their bathing-suits?"

Billy acted as master of ceremonies, and at his, "One, two, three, go!" each doll fell with a splash from the stone where it had been held by its little owner.

The current carried them gently down-stream, and even the boys became excited in seeing which would pass the "tape" first, which was a piece of string from Hugh's pocket, fastened across the brook to the bushes on each side.

"Oh, mine's ahead!" cried Marion, her eyes intent on the green-clad swimmer.

"There goes Wiggles' first," said Billy, as Marion's doll suddenly swung round in a circle, delaying its progress.

"See mine, see mine!" squealed Alice, jumping up and down on the bank, and nearly tumbling in to join the bathers.

But it would take too long to tell you all the details of the "swim," except to say that Wiggles' doll was side-tracked by a surprised little turtle, that snapped angrily at the red cloth, thinking it, no doubt, a new variety of food. How the children screamed with laughter, Wiggles as much as any one, although it put her out of the race, as her doll bumped and stopped against a stone.

Jeannette's doll swam straight into a mass of fleur-de-lys and became entangled among them, but Alice's and Marion's dolls went gayly on down-stream, sometimes one ahead, sometimes the other, until a fluttering breeze caught the purple doll and rushed her under the line victorious.

Such cheers as then arose! Even the boys clapped and acknowledged that they would never have believed a doll's race could be so thrilling. Then, after the swimmers had been rescued and were once more on dry land, Alice's doll received a prize, which proved to be a cunning little clock for her doll-house, that could tick when wound, and wave its pendulum back and forth.

If care had not been taken, the boys would have had it apart, to see "what made it go." So busy were the girls admiring the prize that they never noticed when the boys slipped away into the woods for a few moments, and they jumped with a start when the three lads crept up behind them and tumbled into each little girl's lap,—what do you suppose? A cunning little birch-bark canoe, made with their own hands from scraps of bark. You can imagine how pleased they were.

"Where did you get them?" cried Jeannette, gazing admiringly at her tiny craft.

"We made them yesterday, and Aunt Elsie sewed the ends for us," answered Dick.

"Then we hid them in a stump in the woods until now," explained Hugh. "Aren't they crackerjacks?"

"Ladies and gentlemen," called Bill, "the next race will be a canoe race. Only members of the Fleur-de-Lys Country Club may take part in this, and all who enter must pay an admission fee of one gold-piece, and, of course, the usual war tax."

As dandelions were accepted for gold, and violets for the taxes, the members soon paid their fees, and the Fleur-de-Lys Country Club race was ready for action.

"Man your boats!" cried Billy.

Into each canoe went a brave swimmer, still in full bathing costume. What mattered it that each doll had to lie flat on her back, owing to an inability to sit, as most celluloid dolls are made unbendable.

"It's a clever canoeist indeed," laughed Aunt Elsie, "that can paddle while lying down."

Then Billy called again, "One, two, three, go!" and away the tiny crafts sailed, puffed along by the soft spring breezes. The same tape was

again the goal. But, alas, Alice's and Jeannette's boats came to grief very soon. They rammed one another, capsized, and would have floated unmanned if they had not been rescued by Hugh.

"He deserves a life-saver's medal," laughed Wiggles, as the dripping purple and blue dolls were carried ashore.

"We must roll them over a barrel to bring them to life," cried Jeannette. "That's what they always do if you nearly drown."

This proved very absorbing, with a large stone used as a barrel, while "Doctor" Jeannette Eaton looked professionally grave, and Alice gasped, "My child, my child! Is she dead all over?" At last the doctor declared them out of danger, and, after recommending some dandelion wine to brace them up, ordered them rolled up in handkerchiefs and put in the sun to take a "sun-cure."

Meanwhile Wiggles' boat with its scarlet occupant crossed the "tape" first, and again a prize mysteriously appeared from Aunt Elsie's workbag, in the form of a tiny doll's piano, just big

enough for a doll-house; for Wiggles was passionately fond of music, and could hardly wait until fall when she would start music-lessons.

"O, dear me suz, there's the twelve-o'clock bell. I'll have to go home for luncheon," bemoaned Marion. "Did you ever see a morning go so fast in your life? Haven't we had the loveliest time?"

"How are the patients, Dr. Eaton?" inquired Dick, nodding toward the two dolls, still taking their sun-bath.

"Very, very poorly," said Dr. Eaton, looking grave and shaking her topknot of curls. "They have a 'temperment' of one hundred and forty degrees."

They were indeed very warm from the broiling sun, and were tenderly carried up under the willow-tree and comfortably arranged on a bed of moss.

"I greatly fear," said the doctor, looking wise, "that we shall have to call in a nurse, as they will have chills soon, and water on the brain from their nearness to drowning."

"Do give them something fashionable," urged

Wiggles. "Any one can have chills. Let's have something where there can be a card on the door; it looks so kind of exclusive,—yellow plague, or black peril, or something like that."

"Why, where's your aunt?" asked Alice, noticing, for the first time, that Aunt Elsie had disappeared. "We must thank her and hurry home."

"She's up in the woods," said Billy, looking as if he wanted to laugh at something.

So, clutching their treasures, all four girls followed the whooping boys up the bank, to the curve of the stream at the edge of the woods. And there, what do you suppose they saw?

CHAPTER THREE

GAMES

THERE, on the ground, surrounded by wild-azalea bushes, whose coral-pink blossoms filled the air with a delicious perfume, was spread a white cloth, and, unpacking things from a big hamper, were Mother and Grandma, and Aunt Elsie; while James, Grandpa Carr's colored chauffeur, was grinning broadly over a big freezer full of ice-cream, and Cubby trotted around on her fat little legs and got in every one's way.

It was such a lovely surprise, although the boys had known all about it; and as Alice's and Marion's people had been asked by Mother, the two little girls could stay with clear consciences and enjoy the delicious picnic luncheon. There were pink-and-white ham sandwiches, and stacks of others with jelly, lettuce, and peanut-butter filling. Then came fruit salad

from the thermos bottle, and, of course, olives, candies, and salted peanuts. And when all these goodies had vanished down hungry throats, some of Mandy's chocolate cake appeared, with two pink candles on it, "Because," Aunt Elsie explained, "it's Boots' second birthday." How they all laughed and petted Boots, who enjoyed the ham as much as any one, and washed his paws most daintily after each course. He blinked his big green eyes in astonishment at the flickering candles atop the cake, but ate his ice cream with much gusto, to show how much he appreciated this birthday celebration.

"Oh, do let's celebrate Boots' birthday every year!" cried Wiggles, dancing around with a piece of cake in each hand. "It's lots more fun than a real birthday party."

"We ought to play Puss-in-the-corner so he could join in," suggested Alice, but Boots, deciding that luncheon was over, settled himself under the bushes for a cozy nap.

"What let's play?" asked Jeannette. "I've eaten and eaten until I don't want to move."

"Here's a new game I've found for you, chil-

dren," said Grandma, producing papers and pencils, which she passed around. "I'll read you a list of questions, and each answer must be in two words. The first word must start with your first initial, and the second word with your last initial. Some of the answers turn out very funny, and I'm sure you will enjoy it."

Mother and Aunt Elsie decided to finish clearing away the remains of the picnic, so only the children played, while Grandma read the questions.

They worked industriously, with many a stifled giggle, and when all were finished, the papers were passed to Grandma to read aloud.

The first question had been, "How would you describe yourself?" Marion, whose initials were M. W., had written "Marvelously Wise." Spelling was not counted, and it was most fortunate, as there were some odd blunders. "What is your chief sport?" brought the answer, "Mangling Wash," over which there were many laughs.

"You'll make your fortune if you turn washlady nowadays," said Billy. "You'd better start

saving your pennies toward an electric washing-machine, if that is your chief aim in life."

The third question was, "What is your favorite food?" to which Marion had written "Maple Whip," which Grandmother and Mother thought very appropriate.

But she had a hard struggle with the last question, which asked what trade or profession she wished her future husband to follow. Finally, after much pencil-nibbling and thought, she put down, "Merely Workman." The girls declared it great fun, and listened with interest as Grandmother read Dick's paper next.

For his description he had, "Real Good," which caused them to shout, as Richard was always in mischief and out again. "Riding Goats" was his favorite amusement, and "Rich Gravy" his favorite food. The boys put their own future profession for the last question, and Dick decided to be a "Real Gentleman," which ended his paper.

"This is lots of fun, Grandma," laughed Jeannette. "Why didn't you tell us about it before?"

"Because I only saw it myself last week, in a

newspaper," confessed Grandma. "I'll read Alice's now."

"'A' is such a pretty letter to have," sighed Wiggles enviously. "Just think, both my initials are the same, and it made it awfully hard 'cause I had so little choice."

"Well, don't look so doleful about it, Miss Polly-Wog-Wiggles," returned Billy. "Any one that has three such marvelous nicknames as Polly, Woggsie, and Wiggles ought not to complain. Oh, Aunt Elsie, will you ever forget the time we were shopping in Morristown, and that old gentleman complimented Wogs on her name?"

"What was the joke?" inquired Marion with interest.

"Why, one time Grandfather, Aunt Elsie, Wiggles, and I were doing some marketing in Morristown. Grandfather—he's not really my grandfather, but I always call him that—was in a hurry to get home, and called to Wiggles, who was looking in a shop window, as all girls will," —here Wiggles interrupted with a loud sniff of disdain,—"and said, 'Get a wiggle on, Polly.'

There was an old gentleman passing by, and he stopped and beamed and said, 'It certainly is a pleasure to hear an old-fashioned name like Polly, after the new-fangled names they call children nowadays. Always be proud of your name, little Miss Polly.' "

"What did you say?" asked Alice, much amused.

"I didn't get a chance to say a single word," replied Wiggles, "for I was so s'prised that I just stood stock-still until he was 'way down the street, and then I didn't want to go rushing after a strange man and say, 'My name isn't Polly at all, just "Polliwog," and Wiggles for short.' Wouldn't he have been 'stonished?"

"I think he would," laughed Mother, seating herself on the soft grass and pulling Cubby beside her. "You're such a heedless little witch, that it would have been just about like you."

"How are the literary efforts coming along?" inquired Aunt Elsie, as, after sending James home with the empty hamper, she joined the laughing crowd.

So Grandmother started once more, and they

found out that Alice described herself as an "Ambitious Maiden," and gave her favorite sport as "Any Mathematics," which drew a giggle from Wiggles, as Alice disliked arithmetic more than anything else.

"You thought 'A' was such an easy letter, Wiggles," declared Alice, "but it was dreadfully hard."

One and all declared Alice's favorite article of food, "Almond Macaroons," to be the best of all, and Marion cried, "Wouldn't they taste good with my 'Maple Whip'?"

"Don't, for pity sake, talk about eating," groaned Jeannette. "I ate three times more than I should have, and I don't believe I could eat another thing."

"That's because you were piggy," jeered Dick, pulling one of her brown curls that had fallen from the knot atop her head.

"Not half so piggy as you," retorted Jeannette. "Who ate five slices of cake and three plates of cream, I'd like to know? And as for sandwiches, I couldn't begin to count."

"Order, order!" cried Aunt Elsie, and they all

quieted down to hear that Alice's future husband would be "A Mason."

"Read Jeannette's next," implored Wiggles. "'J' is such a hard letter."

So, as Grandmother was tired, Mother started on the next slip of paper.

Description, "Just Elegant," wrote Jeannette in her round, clear hand.

"Favorite sport, 'Just Eating,'" broke in Dick, snickering. "Ha, ha, Jet, I got you that time."

"No, it's Juggling Elephants," replied Mother with a smile. "You'll need a good deal of muscle for that sport, my dear."

Favorite food, "Juicy Egg-plant," went on the writing, and Jeannette had settled on a "Jolly Eskimo" for her future partner.

"You'll have to live in a snow hut and eat whale-blubber and delicacies like that," put in Billy. "What a happy future to look forward to. You know they woo you by seizing you by the hair of your head and dragging you away. You have good hair for an Eskimo bride. See, he'll do like this—" and Billy grabbed the long

curls and gave a blood-curdling exhibition of an Eskimo groom, until Jeannette shrieked that he was pulling her hair out by the roots, and Cubby's lip began to quiver suspiciously.

"You're a bad, bad boy to hurt my Jet," she wailed. "I don't think your muvver has brought you up derry (very) nicely."

"He was just fooling," explained Jet, wiping away the big tears streaming down the wee bear's face.

"I offer my humble apologies," said Billy gravely. "There, Cub, does that suit you? I am afraid she'll find the weather a trifle chilly up by the North Pole. In fact, little Miss Snippets, if you cried like that up in Eskimo land, all your tears would turn to ice and freeze your face."

Cubby felt her plump cheeks cautiously, as if fearing the freezing process might have already started.

"Maybe Jet will live wite next door to Santy Claus," she volunteered happily. "And—and maybe when I visit her she'll let me eat lots and lots of Eskimo pie."

Billy let out a war-whoop. "I never thought of that, but maybe she will," he told the ecstatic Cubby, who was beaming at the idea. "How about it, Jet?"

"Well, she won't have to complain about my eating too much raw fish and blubber when I visit her," teased Dick.

"How do you know you'll be invited?" returned Jeannette calmly.

"Hugh, you are next," said Mother. "Hugh describes himself as 'Heavily Whiskered,' so I suppose that is the way we are to imagine him."

"Oh, Hugh," cried Alice in horror. "Just think how terrible red whiskers would look."

"I am going to have them down to my waist when I grow up," declared Hugh calmly, not at all upset by the shrieks of derision that greeted his announcement.

"Lovely place for a bird's nest," put in Dick kindly. "One thing though, they'd be fine for polishing your shoes, and you'd never need to wear a necktie or a clean shirt, because no one could ever tell, if you were camouflaged with billy-goat whiskers."

"Oh, that reminds me," laughed Grandma suddenly, "of one time when Wiggles was about Cubby's age, and Grandfather and I, and her great-grandfather—my father, children—took her to Bronx Park to see the menagerie. She was charmed with everything, but stood longest before a little goat, and gazed and gazed at her. Finally she piped up in a shrill, loud voice, with a most angelic smile, as she pointed at the goat, 'Oh, him has whiskers just like my dear, dear, great-grandpa.' "

"What did you do with me?" demanded Wiggles in horror. "Wasn't I a disgraceful child?"

"Maybe your 'muvver' didn't bring you up 'derry' well, either," quoted Billy mischievously.

"I didn't do anything," said Grandma, laughing at the recollection, "except laugh, for every one around just shouted. You talked so very plainly that every word could be understood, and your great-grandfather never got over telling about when he was compared to a goat. He thought it was very cunning."

"Well, I think it was just dreadful," declared Wiggles solemnly. "I don't see, Mother,

where you ever got such a mortor-fying child."

"Well," said Mother cheerfully, "I seem to stand the strain very well. Now, let's see what Hugh has chosen as his favorite sport."

"Harpooning Whales" was to be the bewhiskered man's hobby, and "Hot Waffles" his chief joy to eat.

"And that's true," broke in Marion suddenly. "He ate seventeen one morning, just oozing with syrup."

"Yum-yum, weren't they good," murmured her brother with a far-away look in his eyes. "And I could have eaten more, only Grandma wouldn't let me."

"I should think not," said Aunt Elsie in dismay. "How did you ever do it?"

"That's nothing," broke in Dick, not wishing to be left behind. "I ate twenty-two hot cakes one morning, didn't I, Billy?"

"Well it's nothing to brag of," said Wiggles crushingly. "I think boys are the queerest——"

"Help, help," cried Billy. "Some one head her off, quick! If Wiggles once gets on the subject of 'What I think of boys,' she'll expound

on their faults and shortcomings until night."

"And then not have nearly enough time to mention them all," put in Wiggles, bound to have the last word.

"To resume our reading," said Mother, " 'Hard Work' is to be Hugh's profession."

This raised another shout, for Hugh was a bookworm, and greatly believed in putting off until to-morrow everything that could be done to-day.

"Here, Woggsie," said Aunt Elsie, "this much-besmudged paper looks like yours. I'll read the next two, and give Mother's throat a chance to rest."

"Description," scrawled Wiggles, whose handwriting was not of the best, "Extremely Exquisite."

"You don't mind patting yourself on the back, youngster, do you?" inquired Billy, pulling a crinkly curl.

"I can't help my initials," answered Wiggles loftily. " 'Twasn't a bit of fun having both letters the same, I can tell you."

Wiggles' chief hobby was "Entertaining

Earls," at which Billy gave a deep groan; and she was fond of eating "Enormous Eclairs," which happened to be true. As for her husband-to-be, he was an "Electrical Engineer," which she declared to be the only easy answer she had.

"Now for William Gerard, better known as Billy," said Aunt Elsie. "Here it is; Description, 'Wise Guy.' "

"Now who thinks a lot of himself?" jeered Wiggles, turning up her nose.

"Look out, look out," called Billy, as if in great alarm. "It turns up enough now, and if you tilt it up too far, it may never get back."

"Silly," was Wiggles' lofty reply.

"Chief sport," continued Aunt Elsie, " 'Western Gunning.' " For Billy was wild to hunt and shoot. "Favorite food," Aunt Elsie resumed, " 'White Grapes.' Future profession, 'Writing Geographies.' "

"You'll be some literary gentleman," jeered Hugh.

"But haven't they been fun?" beamed Wiggles. "I wish there were more to read."

"Here is one more question you may each answer aloud," said Grandma. "I'll give you five minutes to think of your favorite flower."

"Nothing starts with a 'J,'" bemoaned Jeannette. "I'll never think of one."

"Time's up," said Mother, looking at her wrist-watch. "Who'll answer first?"

"I will," answered Dick. "My flower is 'Red Geranium.'"

"Very good," approved Grandmother. "Now I can see that Marion is ready."

"'Milk-Weed,'" replied Marion blushing. "It's the only thing I can think of with my initials."

"'Elephant's Ears,'" called out Wiggles. "You know, those big flappy plants that grow in front of the post-office."

"'Japanese Elderberry,'" ventured Jeannette, "and I'm not even sure that there is such a Japanese plant."

"It will do," answered Grandma, smiling at her little granddaughter. "What shall we hear from you, Hugh?"

"Hardy Wisteria," said Hugh triumphantly. "My, that was hard. Hurry up, Bill; you ought to be 'Sweet William.' "

"Ladies first," returned William with a gallant flourish toward Alice, whose brow was puckered with thought.

"Prithee tell me, little one, what your favorite posy may be?"

" 'Autumn Marigolds,' " answered Alice quickly. "Now tell yours."

" 'Winter Green,' ma'am. How does that suit the Lady Alice?"

"That isn't a flower at all; it's a flavor," cried Marion.

"You ask Grandmother," cried William loftily, "if it isn't a plant, and a flowering one, too. Dear, dear, such ignorance as you kidlets show. Ta-ta, youngsters, we *men* are going fishing."

"Men, indeed," sniffed Wiggles, much amused. "Why, you're nothing but just little boys."

After the boys had gone, the grown-ups col-

lected embroidery-bags and other belongings, and, with Boots and Cubby leading, the procession returned once more to the willow-tree and Fleur-de-Lys Point.

CHAPTER FOUR

CUBBY'S ADVENTURE

IT looked as if the fairies had been at work, for there under the spreading willow-tree were five tiny tents, each big enough to hold a family of dolls with comfort.

With cries of delight, all four friends and Cubby danced round and round, exclaiming: "Where did you get them? Aren't they cunning?"

While the children were enthusing, Grandma, Mother, and Aunt Elsie settled themselves comfortably with their embroidery, and smiled at the children's raptures.

"Do you like them?" asked Aunt Elsie.

"Indeed we do. We never saw dolls' tents before," chorused the girls.

"I know you're 'mused about something by the 'spression around your mouth, Aunt Elsie.

Please be a dear good auntie, and stop teasing us and tell us where you got them?" implored Wiggles, dancing up and down in her excitement.

"Yes, pretty please," begged Jeannette. "You have a wicked twinkle in your eyes."

"Oh, oh, let me see it!" demanded Cubby, approaching on a run, and peering at her aunt's eyes with interest. "Does it hurt you, Aunt Elsie?"

"Does what hurt?" asked Aunt Elsie, catching up the wee bear to give her a hug and a kiss.

"The—the thing that Jet said was in your eye. You know, the 'squinkle,'" explained Cubby, hunting through her mind for the word and bringing it out triumphantly.

"Oh, oh, Mother, she thinks it's something like having a cinder in the eye," shrieked Wiggles, much amused.

Cubby was much offended by the mirth her remark caused. She hated to be laughed at by the older girls. "It's not polite to laugh," she told them with dignity, her very curls bristling with indignation. "You just wait till you're a

itty bit of a gurrl and I'm a big grown-up lady, and then see how you feel when I laugh at your 'steaks.' "

"So you shall," replied Wiggles good-naturedly. "You shall look at me like this," and she gave a condescending glance down toward her feet. "And you may laugh at my 'steaks' as much as you want,—and my chops, too," she finished with a giggle.

"And what will you do?" asked Cubby breathlessly, all dignity gone before this absorbing by-play.

"Oh, I'll shrink, and shrink, beneath your withering stare, until I shrivel up like a dried leaf, and blow away. Now Auntie, do tell us where you got the tents."

"Well, those 'disgustable' boys made the framework," replied Aunt Elsie demurely," and Mother and I made the cotton squares to cover them. We thought your dolls might enjoy tenting for a change."

"I'll never call those boys 'disgustable' again," puffed Wiggles, rushing back and forth like a busy little beaver, and carrying dolls' furniture

and dishes with which to arrange the tents. "They're just perfect pets," she finished.

It was to be doubted as to whether or not the boys would have enjoyed being called "pets." Perhaps it was just as well that they did not hear.

"It's the loveliest picnic that I ever saw," declared Alice positively, arranging a tiny bed with covers and pillows. "Let's pretend that this is a girls' camp on a big lake."

The idea was seized with enthusiasm, and Jeannette rushed to get the "invalids," who were still resting on their mossy beds.

"They are here for their health," she announced importantly, "as their doctor told them they needed to go to a health resort."

"What shall we name the camp?" demanded Marion, arranging a table, out on the mossy "lawn," with tiny dishes and cups. "They must eat out-of-doors, for that's the way they do at Maine camps."

Marion had spent part of one summer in the Maine woods, and so the children considered her an authority on camping.

"Pine Grove," suggested Jeannette. "Oh, I forgot there aren't any pines near by."

"Pebbly Brook Camp," suggested Wiggles, which was declared just the thing.

"It seems to me," said Mother, who had been watching the camp with much interest, "that you need some hammocks out under your trees. Don't your dolls enjoy swinging?"

"Oh," said Marion earnestly, "we had lots and lots of hammocks when we were at camp in Maine, but I don't see how we could fix any here."

"How would these do?" asked Mother, holding up the cunningest little cocoon-shaped hammocks that she had been busy making from scraps of muslin and string. "Cubby, you rascal, what have you done with my scissors and thread? Somebody rescue them. Quick, catch her!"

The advice came too late. Splash, splash, went the scissors into the brook, and Wiggles rescued them with difficulty by going out on the stepping-stones and teetering there while she fished for them. Of course she fell in. If there

was an inch of water, Wiggles always landed in it. So off had to come the pink gingham dress and be hung on the bushes to dry, while, wrapped in an old apron which, fortunately, Grandma had brought to protect her dress while dishing out ice-cream, Wiggles serenely went back to her play, unmindful of the funny spectacle she made, wound about in a lavender percale apron, fastened with safety-pins.

The hammocks were hung before fleur-de-lys plants, and the campers greatly enjoyed using them. Ting-a-ling-a-ling rang Alice, using the bell on Boots' collar for a dinner-bell, and causing him to open one indignant eye at being so rudely disturbed. "Come to the camp dinner." So all the campers in swimming, and those boating or comfortably resting in hammocks, hurried out to the dinner-table, and partook of violet soup, sweet-grass salad, chocolate,—made by mixing mud and water,—and many other such delicacies. Then trays were made from big leaves and carried to the two invalids, who were now allowed to recline in the hammocks under the "trees."

"Gracious," said Alice, looking at her prize clock that was wagging its pendulum merrily, "it's almost time for them to go fishing or the fish won't bite." So, making rods from pieces of twig, to which were fastened bits of thread from Mother's embroidery bag, the doll-families hastened to the river to catch a fish for dinner.

"My Clementine," said Jeannette, naming the invalid doll, "feels that a bit of fresh salmon with egg sauce would tempt her appetite for dinner."

"So does Muriel," declared Alice, tenderly tucking the poor child under a heavy quilt. "She feels very low, and I think salmon is the only thing that will save her. She's getting worse and worse by the minute."

"Put hot-water bags at her head, and ice-bags at her feet," ordered Dr. Jeannette Eaton hastily; "and I'll catch a salmon and she may eat it all for dinner."

"Is your poor itty dolly derry derry sick?" asked Cubby, making a grieved lip and unwinding yards of Mother's white cotton in her earnestness.

"She'll be better soon," said Wiggles cheer-

fully. "She has the 'epizoodic' and needs a specialist's care. Don't you want to play with us, and with your cunning little tent?"

"No," replied Evelyn positively. "I wants to pick some booful flowers up dere," pointing with a dimpled finger at the vivid azalea bushes at the edge of the woods where they had eaten their luncheon.

"All right, Baby," said Mother; "you pick me a big bunch of flowers, only don't go any farther away than where we had our lunch."

So Cubby scurried off in delight, and the other children dropped dolls and fishing-lines when told by Aunt Elsie to choose a turtle apiece from the stream for a turtle race.

"What's a turtle race?" demanded the children in a breath, pelting down the bank in search of the turtles that inhabited the crystal-clear brook.

"I just know it will be fun," said Alice happily, bearing her dripping captive toward Aunt Elsie. "What shall I do with this, now that I have it?"

"Put it on the 'race-track,' " replied Aunt Elsie, laughing at the curiosity shown in each eager

face, as she pointed to a space on the ground marked with two chalk-lines.

"Are these race-horses?" inquired Jeannette, much diverted at this novel idea. "Mine's a blue-ribbon racer, named 'Rubber,' and he's a long-distance champion."

"Mine is 'petty-greed,' " announced Wiggles, who hadn't the slightest idea what she was talking about. "His name is 'Elastic,' and he's won fourteen gold cups, all hand-engraved."

"My, he is some racer," laughed Grandma. "What is the name of your race-turtle, Marion?"

Marion placed her pet gingerly on the ground. "Let me see," she said undecidedly. "His name is 'Marmaduke,' and his picture appears in all the best papers and magazines. He's particularly noted for his speed, and has been nicknamed 'Lightning.' "

"He looks it," giggled Alice. "My turtle's name is 'Whiz.' Note his jaunty air and his speaking countenance. He's a high jumper, and is confident of victory in this race."

"On the line," said Aunt Elsie, "ready, set,—go!"

It was the funniest race of all. Wiggle's turtle absolutely refused to move at all, and Alice's racer strayed far from the track. So Aunt Elsie declared that Marion's "Marmaduke" was the winner of the first prize, with "Rubber" a close second. And after the "race-horses" had been returned to the stream, two more interesting tissue-paper packages appeared, and were unwrapped with many "ohs" and "ahs" of delight.

Jeannette received a carpet-sweeper not much bigger than her little finger, while Marion beamed with pleasure at beholding a tiny doll-carriage, so small that it sat on the palm of her hand, and held with comfort the "littlest camper."

"Isn't it just too scrumptious to think each one of us won a prize?" smiled Wiggles. "Now we can fix up our doll-houses, and all the dolls may take music-lessons on my little piano."

Cubby had appeared several times among the azalea bushes with her chubby hands full of blossoms, and had brought down a few for Grandma before returning for a "dreat big bunch." Be-

ing of a venturesome disposition, she started on an exploring trip by herself, dragging after her Auntie's scarlet "payasol," as she called Aunt Elsie's sunshade, for which she cherished a deep affection.

There were so many things to look at as she trudged along. It was so exciting to chase the yellow butterflies, and dart after the sleek gray squirrels that kept chattering at her from the tree-tops.

" 'Spect those 'quirls' are glad to see me," she murmured to herself as she wandered farther and farther away on her quick little feet into the meadows on the other side of the grove, where she had a faint recollection of finding some wild strawberries one day when walking with her daddy.

Naughty little Cubby. Well enough she knew that Mother and the rest believed her safely gathering wild blossoms; but she said to herself, "I wants to pick some 'trawberries' for my dear 'Mayma' (Grandma)." Over the shallow brook and through the pasture-bars she crept, pulling Auntie's sunshade along behind her.

"Sun's hot," said she aloud, mopping off her flushed face with the hem of her frock. "Dess I'll put the booful payasol over me."

Strange to relate, her strong little fingers actually snapped it into place, and much pleased with herself, and nearly hidden by its scarlet folds, she trotted on. Finding a few strawberries, she decided they were so good that she would eat them herself, wiping the red stains on her clean white frock, and adding a few smears to her rosy face. "Muvver'll be s'prised," she tried to soothe her uneasy conscience, "when she sees my "trawberries.' " She fully expected to pick many more to take back with her, but they proved so tempting that she quickly popped each one into her own eager mouth as soon as plucked.

Now Farmer Brown owned the meadow where she had wandered, and in it, as grown-ups could well see, by the big signs fastened to the trees, was a big savage bull.

Little cared Cubby for boards with "Beware of the Bull" on them. She was too small to read, anyway, and so she puffed along under the big

parasol, getting nearer and nearer the vicious animal.

"Just like a lady, I is," she said to herself, tossing her curls with glee. "Wish somebody could see me with this booful big payasol over me. Guess Billy wouldn't say then, 'Look at itty Miss Snippets under my feets.' No indeedy. He'd think, 'My, what a dreat big gurrl is a-coming along; must be Jet.' " "Jet" was the nearest that Cubby could get to "Jeannette." "Then my Pampa and Mayma (Grandpa and Grandma) wouldn't say, 'If here isn't babykins.' "—For it was a sad blow to the little one to be so much younger than her greatly admired sisters, and she always wanted to tag along with them, and do everything they did, regardless of the difference in age.

But no one was in sight to admire the vain baby, until under a gnarled apple-tree Cubby spied the bull.

"There," said she with pleasure, "is a nice bossy cow. Guess I'll show bossy my payasol."

Nearer and nearer she crept, singing "Hey! diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow

jumped over the moon," and wondering in her baby mind if this could be the very cow that jumped.

"See my booful red payasol, bossy," she murmured sweetly, poking the sunshade under the bull's nose.

It was lucky for wee Evelyn that she sang, for the clear sweet voice attracted the attention of a young man, who, fishing-rod in hand, was just passing the pasture-bars. What he heard was Cubby saying, "Bossy, pretty bossy, just look at my booful red payasol," and then he saw the golden-haired baby wave a brilliant scarlet sunshade before the infuriated bull.

How Robert Burnett ever leaped the pasture-bars and seized the indignant child, he does not remember. Fortunately she dropped the parasol and it flew in the bull's face, or else I guess the wee Cubby bear would have been gored to death.

Back under the willow-tree the turtle-race had proved so absorbing that Cubby's continued absence had not been noticed, until several calls had failed to bring the usual response. At first

they all thought that she was mischievously playing hide-and-seek, but when no baby could be found, a search began in earnest, and the entire picnic-party arrived at the pasture-bars in time to see the rescue.

It was a white and trembling young man that placed an angry youngster in Mother's arms, for all Cubby would say was, "My booful pay-asol, all lost!"

"Oh, my baby, my baby!" cried Mother and Grandma in a breath, while Aunt Elsie cried as she looked in the field and saw the wreck of what had once been a parasol, and thought of what might have happened to the wee bear.

Of course they could not even begin to thank Mr. Burnett, and he was cordially invited to dinner that evening, where Daddy and all the others tried to tell him a little of their appreciation, and thank him over and over for their darling's life.

Cubby was the calmest of them all, but absolutely refused to make friends with her rescuer, associating him in her mind with the loss of her beloved sunshade, and the scolding she had received for running away.

"Hasn't it been the greatest day?" said Wiggles, as she consumed enormous quantities of bread and butter. "First, we had such a lovely time, and then we had such a scary time. Why, it was like a thrilling movie, where the hero rescues somebody."

They all shouted at Wiggles' description, although Mr. Burnett blushed.

"You do me too much honor, Miss Wiggles," he said gravely. "Never in my wildest dreams have I imagined being compared to a moving-picture hero."

"Well," said Polly Wiggles honestly, "you're so tall, you do look something like one. Only it ought to have been Aunt Elsie you rescued instead of Cubby, 'cause she's a young lady, and then you could have married her and I would have been flower-girl at the wedding, just like they do in the movies," she finished in one breath.

"And I don't see," she told Jet indignantly, as they were busy undressing for bed a few minutes later, "why they rushed us off to bed in such a hurry. Do you?"

CHAPTER FIVE

LIMERICKS

FOUR little maids were walking home from school. At least, three were walking sedately, while Elizabeth chased after first one thing and then another, skipping back to her companions every few minutes to join in the conversation.

"Oh, it's perfectly dreadful," cried Alice, her face all puckered up in a snarl, and her usually sunny blue eyes stormy, "to make every single child in school from third grade up, write a verse; we're too little; I simply *can't*."

"Why, Alice, it's lots of fun," said Wiggles earnestly. "I often do it just to 'muse myself. Just rhyme it up in your head, and then write it down. We have two weeks to write it in, and Miss Mason said it only had to be four lines, although it could be as much longer as we wished."

"Two *years* would be too short for me, and four lines just four lines too long," laughed Marion. "How you can say it's easy, I don't see. My goodness, girls, it's dreadfully hot. Let's sit down here on the grass and cool off, before we go any farther. I'm sizzling."

Down dropped all four girls, under the shade of a big maple-tree.

"Let's hear one of your poems, Wiggles," asked Alice. "Maybe it will help us along. I don't even know how to start one."

"Well, wait a minute till I think," said Polly Wiggles. Thinking with Elizabeth never meant sitting still, so, to "clear her brain," as she explained it, she spun round and round on one toe.

"Do please stop," implored Jet. "You make me dizzy to watch you. How can you be so lively on this hot day? Seems as if I'd melt."

"I've remembered it now, anyway," cried the budding authoress. "It's called 'At the Zoo,' and of course it isn't a really truly poem like grown-ups make; it's just a verse!" With a loud "Ahem," to clear her throat, she began:

"One day I went a-walking,
A-walking in the zoo,
And closely by my side I took
My little children two.

The day was bright and sunny,
And everything was fair;
We saw the bears, the snakes, and birds,
Also the lion's lair.

We heard a dreadful roaring,
And o'er the ground there came
A great big yellow lion,
Shaking his yellow mane.

My heart did *not* stop beating,
As the lion onward flew,
For it was our circus lion,
And I was *their* kangaroo."

All this was spoken without pause or punctuation, and so rapidly that the authoress was decidedly out of breath when she finished.

"There," she exclaimed with an air of relief, "I didn't forget any of it, and I was so afraid I would."

"Wiggles, how do you do it?" inquired practical Marion in despair. "That was perfectly beautiful. When you grow up are you going to be an authoress?"

"Either that, or an editor. I haven't decided which," was the modest reply. "I never have had all the books I wanted to read, and just think what fun an editor must have, with nothing to do all day long but sit with his feet on top of a mahogany desk and read, and read, and smoke big black cigars."

"Will you smoke cigars?" asked Jeannette, much shocked. "I don't think you can be an editor, anyway, Wogs, for I'm 'most sure it's something only men can be, like ministers and, —and garbage-men," she finished wildly, groping about in her mind for a suitable comparison.

"Well," retorted her sister undaunted, "then I'm going to 'stablish a 'presidents.' "

"A what?"

"A 'presidents.' That's what daddy said the other night, and when I asked him what it meant, he said 'to start a new custom.' "

"I remember, but it didn't sound just like that to me," returned Jeannette, wrinkling her brow in thought.

"For pity's sake," interrupted Marion, who had mentally been going over the remarkable "poem" again, "how could you tell what a kangaroo felt like? I couldn't."

"Pooh, just as easy," answered Wiggles much surprised. "Just imagine! Like we pretend, when we dress up in Mother's clothes, that we're grown-up young ladies. The teacher always says, 'Put yourself in the place of the one you're writing about,' so I did, and felt just as 'kangarooey' as could be. I made that up in bed last night. I often do."

It was not to be wondered at that Wiggles had a fondness for rhyme, without, as Mother laughingly remarked, "rhyme or reason." Aunt Elsie was always writing limericks about incidents or places, and Mother was almost as bad; while even Daddy had been known to chant extemporaneously, after a particularly good dinner:

"I am replete,
Filled to my feet,
With things I like the best to eat."

So when the news of the poems was broken to the family a short time later, it did not horrify them as it might have done. Instead, Grandma said comfortably: "Why not have a limerick contest now? It will be lots of fun, and practice for you children, too. Here come Dick and Billy. I suppose they're in it, too, so somebody get paper and pencils."

Dick was in the last half of the fifth year, and Billy in the sixth. Billy had been out of school the year before with a severe attack of diphtheria. They both shared the family weakness for rhyme, and there is still told a story of Dick's baby days. When he was about four years old, his mother took him marketing one morning, and the clerk who waited upon them was named Dean. That night at dinner, Dick piped up, "Mother, I made a piece of 'poultry' to-day 'bout that man." Upon much urging, he recited his 'poultry,' which was:

"Mr. Dean,
Ate a bean."

Elizabeth and Jeannette rushed indoors for writing materials, and were back by the time all were seated on the comfortable porch.

It was funny to see the different ways they went about it. Mother, Grandma, and Aunt Elsie comfortably sat in their wicker porch-chairs, waiting for an inspiration; but Wiggles curled up on the steps and chewed hard at her pencil until genius apparently burned, and she scribbled away industriously.

Dick and Billy withdrew with many snorts and giggles to a corner, where they mysteriously doubled up with laughter every few minutes, consuming Jeannette with curiosity.

Poor Alice and Marion wriggled uncomfortably, for though they knew what limericks were, "it was much easier," as Marion expressed it, "to laugh at somebody else's than write your own."

"I just know those awful boys are up to some mischief," cried Jeannette, glancing over at the

corner where the lads were apparently diligent little scribes.

"Thank goodness, I am through," sighed Alice," but I am ashamed to read it."

"Well, my dear," said Grandmother Carr encouragingly, "we can't all do the same things well, most fortunately, or this would be a queer old world. Elizabeth and Jeannette both have the rhyming habit, but neither is as clever with her fingers as you and Marion, and could not begin to make such a pretty scarf as Marion knitted for her doll, or the tiny sweater you finished."

So the little girls quite cheered up, and drew their chairs up in a big circle with the others. Then, beginning with Grandma as oldest, each one read aloud the limerick she had made.

"There are four little girls living near,
Who've been playmates for many a year,
They're always together,
No matter what weather,
And to us they are all very dear,"

read Grandma, smiling at the four little friends, who looked much pleased.

"Oh, Mrs. Carr, won't you please write that out for us to put in our scrap-books?" asked Marion, while Wiggles rushed over to give her beloved grandmother a grizzly-bear hug. For all the girls kept big scrap-books, which they called "memory books," and in which they pasted their valentines, and souvenirs from parties and places where they had been.

"Why not put all the limericks in?" suggested Mother. "I'm sure they'll be fun to look at and read next winter when we're back in the city."

The girls all thought that would be a lovely plan, so, the question being settled satisfactorily, Mother read aloud from her slip of paper:

"A boy I know well who's named Billy,
Ate 'hot dogs' one morning, until he
Felt dreadfully then,
And said, 'Never again;
I think I was oh, very silly.' "

How the little girls laughed, and so did Bill, although he turned rather red at the recollection.

It seems that a much older boy dared Bill to

eat a dozen and a half "hot dogs," and volunteered to pay for them if all were consumed. Nothing loath, and not stopping to think of the after-consequences, Bill forced them down, every one. The first six were fine, the next six an effort, and to eat the remaining "dogs" proved to be hard work.

However, Bill was triumphant. "I won the dare," said he. But the other boy "reneged," as Bill put it, and refused to pay, so it was a sick and sorrowful William that told the tale to Dad.

And then, to make bad matters worse, Billy's father said that he must earn the money himself to pay for them, and it would teach him to be more careful in the future. Poor Billy. Not only did the debt hang over his head, but his overworked stomach rebelled, and it was several days before he could get to work cutting grass, raking lawns, and running errands until the necessary amount had been made. But ever since he had been more careful about looking before he leaped.

A mischievous smile crinkled up Aunt Elsie's blue eyes, as she began:

"If there's water, she'll surely fall in,
But she always comes up with a grin;
Then little Miss Wiggle,
Will say with a giggle,
'Why can't I be proper and prim?' "

Polly Wiggles laughed so much at this true description of her propensities for mishaps, that she doubled up on the railing where she had been perched, and fell head over heels, being rescued by Dick, who had enough presence of mind to grab fast to her slippers and hang on until she could be pulled up.

Of course she lost her hair ribbon and tore a big hole in her dotted swiss dress, but those were everyday mishaps.

As soon as the confusion had died down, Jeannette read aloud:

"Who always is playing a trick?
Who always says, 'Gimme a lick?'
Who loves to pull curls,
When he sees little girls?
Of course it's our cousin,—it's Dick."

How everybody laughed, Dick as much as any one, for the 'Gimme a lick' sounded so like

his favorite expression when candy was anywhere around, or cake-making was going on.

"Mine's awful," said Marion hopelessly. "The lines seem to sound so snarly, but it just popped into my head."

"A girl named Jeannette, from the city,
Brought a pussy cat, furry and pretty,
He wears boots on his paws,
To conceal his sharp claws;
Puss-in-Boots is the name of this kitty."

"Boots wishes me to say," cried Aunt Elsie, catching up the furry pet, "that he feels greatly honored by having a real poem written about him."

"I think it extremely clever," approved Mother, "and the lines don't sound snarly at all. It's hard to do, too, until you practise a few times."

"Don't lose that, Marion. I want it for my scrap-book," put in Jeannette. "I'll paste a big snapshot of Boots right above it."

"Oh," giggled Wiggles; "if that were lost, it would truly be a 'cat-astrophe.'"

"Cool her fevered brow," groaned Billy. "Too much knowledge has gone to her head."

"Ssh," said Wiggles; "it's Alice's turn." The boys, for some mysterious reason, had insisted on reading their limericks last.

"Here comes Evelyn, just in time," laughed Alice, as the wee bear appeared, fresh from Nurse Hannah's hands, and ran with a crow of delight to sit on Grandma's lap. "I wrote about Cubby," went on Alice, picking up her much-crossed and re-crossed slip of paper.

So Cubby listened intently as Alice read:

"The wee bear, although very small,
Hopes soon to grow up big and tall,
But plump, round, and chubby,
We best like our Cubby,
Who's petted by one and by all."

"That's true," laughed Grandma, hugging the small piece of mischief. "It's a wonder she isn't entirely spoiled."

"Now, Woggsie, it's up to you," called the boys. So with a grin that brought big dimples into her cheeks, Wiggles declaimed:

"Who said, 'Picnics for girls are no fun?'
Saying, 'Oh, no, indeed, we won't come;'
Until hearing of 'eats,'
Cake and candy and sweets,
You could not keep them off with a gun."

"No fair! no fair! Who has been telling tales?" cried Dick, looking from one laughing face to another.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Cubby, who hadn't the slightest idea what the joke was about. The four girls shook at the expression on the boys' faces, for they had all heard the joke about the picnic. The lads had scoffed at it as "girl stuff" until they heard of the sandwiches and cakes that Grandmother and Mother were preparing. Then they hastened to Aunt Elsie and suggested making the canoes, and hanging around to "help," to which she gave her permission with a quiet smile, but with a roguish twinkle in her eye.

"Just you wait, Miss Polly-Wog-Wiggles," promised Dick as he tweaked her curly mop. And with a grimace he commenced in a high falsetto voice:

"Who sticks her nose up with a stare,
And flounces by with such an air,
Because for boys she does not care?
WIGGLES."

Here Billy joined in:

"Who says, 'They make the loudest noise,
And muss up things and break our toys?
Oh, aren't we glad that we're not boys!'
JET.

"Who says, 'We've nicer times, it's true,
When there's just girls. I think, don't you,
That boys should live out in a zoo?'
ALICE.

"Who says, 'Why will they call me "Red,"
Or "Carrots," when the teacher said,
That I had "Tissue" hair, instead?'
MARION."

Here Dick resumed the tale, while the appreciative audience wiped away tears of mirth.

"What girl was it who ran away,
With Auntie's parasol so gay,
And tried to get a bull to play?
CUBBY.

"Who packed up sandwiches galore,
And through the woods the hamper bore?
Why, Grandma, Mother, and one more,
AUNT ELSIE."

"Only," as Dick explained in an aside, "it was really James who carried the hamper, but that was poetic license."

Then together, in sepulchral tones, both boys burst out:

"Who nobly toiled and worked away,
Acquiring calloused hands that day,
That you have tents and boats for play?
THOSE DISGUSTABLE BOYS."

"Oh, it was splendid," cried the girls, clapping their hands, when the boys, with a deep bow, had taken their seats, and Grandma, Mother, and Aunt Elsie were wiping their flushed and laughing faces. "But how did you know we said those things?"

"Why, Dick was on the other side of the stream, behind the bushes, and you were so busy gabbling away, and talked so loudly, that he

heard it all. He ran on ahead, and beat you to the Point by about five minutes."

"Now will you be good?" demanded Billy with a ferocious frown at Jet, as he made a grab for her long curls, and nearly fell off the front steps as she danced tantalizingly out of his reach.

" 'Listeners never hear good of themselves,' " quoted Wiggles provokingly as she circled warily around Billy, seeking a chance to grab his fountain-pen and run.

"No, you don't, young lady," said Dick, creeping up from the back and pinioning her hands behind her back. "Little girls should never——"

"Never what?" asked Wiggles coolly, freeing herself like a particularly agile eel, and taking Dick's necktie with her in the bargain.

"Truce, truce," cried Marion, waving her handkerchief as a white flag. "It's getting late and I have to go home, but it was lots of fun."

"Let's make up limericks some time again," suggested Alice enthusiastically, and she and Marion said good-by until the next day. They

ran down the lilac-bordered path, stopping at the gate to wave, while the boys followed after them, chanting at the top of their voices:

"Maidens dear, we hate to leave you,
Hate to say a fond farewell,
But we're honest,—can't deceive you,
We can hear our dinner-bell.

Hear it calling, 'Dick, you sinner,
Billy, too, come home for tea.'
There's a lemon pie for dinner,
And 'I hear it calling me.' "

"Didn't we have fun?" said Wiggles, settling comfortably in the porch-hammock, when Daddy's voice called from the house," Better scurry, kidlets, and wash your hands unless you want to be late; and, though no lemon pie is 'calling us,' there are fried chicken and hot waffles for dinner."

So the little girls scurried.

CHAPTER SIX

TEA AT MISS HELEN'S

POLLY WIGGLES and Jeannette looked with pleasure at the two pretty dresses that were spread on the bed in the Forget-me-not room.

"Are we to wear our new dresses this afternoon, Mother?" inquired Jeannette; for the two little girls had been invited by their mother's old friend, Miss Helen, to take afternoon tea at her attractive white cottage about three quarters of a mile from The Lilacs. Miss Helen Cole was principal of the school at Meadowbrook, and was always planning delightful surprises for the children, so they both were agog with impatience to find out what the "something" was that Miss Helen had whispered she wanted to talk over with them.

"I thought it would be a good time to wear them," answered Mother, deftly slipping the

rose-pink organdie over Wiggles' curly head as she spoke. "Stand still, child, so I can button you up."

Jeannette's daffodil-yellow organdie was fastened next, and big pink-and-yellow butterfly bows were tied to the curly tresses. Then Mother kissed them good-by with a few final words of caution. "*Don't* forget to thank Miss Helen for your pleasant afternoon, and *do* be careful of your frocks."

The sisters fluttered downstairs with a grown-up air of importance which was increased by Cubby's wail of "Me wants to go, too."

"You're too little," explained Jeannette kindly, stooping to kiss the rosy face; "and, besides, you are going out with Mother and Grandma in the car."

"Little bits of wee bears don't go to afternoon teas," added Wiggles, wiping away the big tears that slid down Evelyn's cheeks. "Only big girls and young ladies go to teas, but we'll tell you all about it when we come home."

"I are a big, big gurrl," gulped Cubby, heart-

broken at being left behind by her adored sisters.

"Who wants tea, anyway?" inquired Aunt Elsie, coming out of the music-room to find out what all the sobbing was about. "Cubby and I are going to have something much better than old tea," she told them. "We're going to have *ice-cream* while we're out this afternoon."

Cubby's woe-begone face brightened as if by magic, while Aunt Elsie hastily waved the girls out of the front door.

"Skip along before she starts crying again," she advised them hastily, and hurried back to talk over with the excited wee bear the fascinating possibility of having "choglit" ice-cream, or "striped pink and white."

"I'm certainly going to be careful to-day," Wiggles confided earnestly to Jeannette as they skipped along the pretty woodland path that led them to Miss Helen's. "Mother's taken so much trouble to make these dresses for us, that I'm going to be very careful about sitting on anything, or falling into anything, or tearing myself on anything, see if I don't."

"You do have the worst luck," Jeannette ac-

knowledged, "like that time we went with Mother to see 'Cinderella' at the movies, and you put your good hat on the seat next to us——"

"And a fat woman came and sat plump on it," giggled Wiggles; "and I was so interested in the picture that I never noticed until after it was over, and then it was as flat as a pancake. Well, you just see this afternoon. I'm going to go home just as clean as when I started."

Alas, none of us can tell the march of events, and I am afraid if Jeannette and Elizabeth could have foreseen how the afternoon was going to terminate, they would have turned about and run back home again.

Miss Helen greeted the little girls warmly, and soon they were comfortably seated on the wide porch, chattering gayly with Mrs. Cole about the dolls' bathing-picnic.

"Do you know," said Miss Helen, "I asked you girls over to-day, especially to find out how you think the school children would enjoy a May-Day frolic, with Maypoles, a May Queen, and all the other pretty old customs?"

"O goody, Miss Helen! Wouldn't that be

lovely," exclaimed Wiggles and Jet in one voice.

"Only," added Jeannette sadly, "isn't it too late? I thought May Day was the first of the month, and to-day is the middle."

"You're right, Jeannette," replied Miss Helen. "It always has been the first of May, but spring comes so late nowadays that the flowers and trees would hardly have been wide enough awake to help us by the first. Then it would have been far too cool to spend a whole day in the meadows wearing thin dresses, so I thought we could choose two weeks from to-day as our official May Day, and be sure of having it warm enough for both little girls and flowers."

"Would all the school be in it?" inquired Wiggles.

"All the children that wanted to come," replied Miss Helen. "I thought it might be fun to revive the old custom of May-baskets, and I wondered if you girls would like to help me make some to-day, to use as models to show to the school on Monday morning when I speak about the May frolic."

"We'd love to," enthused the children, and

Wiggles could not resist spinning around on one toe, "to let off steam."

"Did you and Mother ever make any when you were little girls?" inquired Jeannette, for Miss Helen and Mother had been schoolmates together at Meadowbrook years before, as Grandmother and Grandfather Carr had spent six or seven months of each year at The Lilacs ever since Mother's baby days.

"Yes, indeed, Jean and I always hung baskets on the door-knobs for each other. Here are the foundation frames that we will use to make the baskets on."

Miss Helen and her mother had cut out hundreds of cardboard basket-frames in preparation, and these were to be placed in the corridors of the school, so that the children might take as many as they wished to cover. The work, of course, must be done at home. The teachers had volunteered to make the Maypoles, and each pupil that wished to be on one was to furnish a ribbon, any color desired, and these would be fastened to the poles.

"I want to make a basket for Mother, and

Aunt Elsie, and Grandma, Jeannette, Marion, Alice, and Cubby, and—oh, lots more," chattered Wiggles, checking them off on her fingers.

"Suppose I give you three dozen basket-frames, assorted styles, to take home, and then you can divide with Marion and Alice and get as many more as you wish at any time. How would that do?"

Both little girls agreed that would be splendid, and the basket-making started.

Such beautiful crêpe and tissue papers as Miss Helen had provided for them. All colors of the rainbow were there, as well as many books showing how to make every kind of basket imaginable.

"These books," Miss Helen told them, "will be on my desk, and may be consulted at any time for ideas. I will furnish basket-frames for all the school, but the tissue paper the children must provide for themselves."

"There won't be any trouble filling them," said Wiggles, as her fingers snipped and folded busily, "for the wild flowers are just thick. All

the May flowers are just ready to leave for the season, and all the June blossoms will just be coming in."

"But we wouldn't have had many blossoms if we had planned it for the first of May," said Miss Helen wisely. "These last two weeks have been exceptionally warm, and have just hurried things along. How do you like this?"

"This" was a dainty yellow basket shaped like a daffodil blossom, with fluted petals and tiny touches of green.

"Oh, Miss Helen, how pretty!"

"That is for your mother," said Miss Helen smiling. "And I am going to hang it myself May Day morning, with a pot of yellow jonquils inside."

The minutes flew as if by magic. It was such fun to see folds and twists of colored paper suddenly bloom under one's fingers; and they all had to stop and admire each basket as it was completed. It seemed only a second before Queenie, the colored maid, appeared to tell them that tea was ready.

"Them suah is powahful handsome," said she, flashing her white teeth in a broad smile at the two little girls, of whom she was very fond.

With reluctant fingers Jeannette laid down her scissors, and Wiggles brushed the snips from her dress.

By the stone wall, under a peach-tree that was covered with fragrant pink blossoms, a dainty little tea-table had been spread, simply inviting hungry little girls to eat. There were the white beaten biscuits at which Queenie excelled, so light you might think they would fly away. Tiny lettuce sandwiches, and marmalade sandwiches, too, and stacks of golden-brown curly "leaf" cookies, smelling pleasantly of spice and other things good, decked each end of the table, while a rosy mound of Polly Wiggles' favorite "squince" jelly, as she always called it, trembled temptingly on a sparkling glass dish.

Then Queenie, her face all one broad grin, brought in bits of patties, filled to the brim with delicious creamed chicken, and, when these had disappeared to the last flaky crumb, there appeared tall crystal glasses heaped with custard

ice-cream that was almost smothered with luscious scarlet strawberries.

It was such fun to eat, with pink peach-blossoms showering petals upon them, and blue-birds and saucy jays screaming at them from near-by trees, attracted by the thought of crumbs.

"I almost forgot to tell you about the choosing of the May King and Queen," said Miss Helen suddenly, as the little girls nibbled at their cookies and admired the tiny candy-filled May-baskets of apple-blossoms that had been at each place as favors.

Jeannette and Polly Wiggles looked up expectantly.

"We are going to choose them by vote," continued Miss Helen smiling at the eager faces. "Next Friday each pupil at school will cast two votes, one for King and one for Queen. Then the boy and girl with the greatest number of votes will have the honor of officiating at the May-Day Revels."

"That's the only fair way," agreed Mrs. Cole. "Otherwise there would be bickering and heart-

burnings. Will the May-Day Majesties have any attendants?"

"Yes, indeed. The King will choose four attendants,—a Herald and three Couriers. The Couriers will remain with him, and the Herald will ride before the line of march, blowing a trumpet, and announcing the King's approach."

"Won't that look pretty?" cried Jeannette. "Seems as if I could hardly wait."

"Then," continued Miss Helen, "the Queen will select four Maids of Honor, and, like Jeannette, I think it will be a very pretty sight. Gracious, can that be thunder, so early in the season?"

It certainly was a distant threatening grumble.

"Seems to me it's getting dark awfully early," said Wiggles in much surprise. "Goodness, Jet, it's six o'clock by Miss Helen's wrist-watch."

Miss Helen was much astonished at the lateness of the hour, and reproached herself for not having noticed before the lengthening shadows and far-distant rumble. The little girls had

told her upon their arrival that Grandma and Mother, Aunt Elsie and Cubby, had gone with the automobile into the city, and would not be back until dinner-time, so she knew there was no likelihood of James coming for them with the car.

"We didn't mean to stay so late, but it was 'cause we had such a lovely time," said Wiggles ingeniously as she kissed Mrs. Cole and Miss Helen good-by, and tucked the bundle of basket-frames under her arm.

"I don't like to have you two little girls take that long walk through the woods alone," said Miss Helen in a troubled voice, with a glance at the dark sky.

"We'll be all right, truly," smiled Jeannette. "Thunder-storms don't usually amount to much so early in the spring, and we'll just scurry along and be home in a twinkling."

"Don't take the woodland path," advised Mrs. Cole, "and then you'll surely be all right. Go round by the road instead. It's only half the distance that way, even if it is dusty, and there is no glaring sun to annoy you now. It does look

very much like a bad storm to me, but it won't come yet awhile."

So with a parting wave of farewell, the sisters ran down the path, kinky black and long brown curls flying as they scampered along.

Now there were two ways of returning to The Lilacs. About five minutes' walk from Miss Helen's the road forked, one way leading through the woods, and the other along the highway. The highway was much the shorter route home, for it was the road used by the farmers and truckmen, and was well bordered by farmhouses and barns. The woodland path, by which the children had gone to Miss Helen's in the early afternoon, was a long three-quarters of a mile, but it was so cool and shady, in contrast to the dusty, glaring highway, that the children greatly preferred it, especially on such a warm day. Now, as they started rapidly down the highway as Mrs. Cole had suggested, Wiggles stopped suddenly.

"Oh, I forgot, Jet; we can't go this way after all. Don't you remember that Daddy told us there was a regular epidemic of scarlet fever all

along here, and said until he told us differently we couldn't use any but the woodland path?"

"Sure enough," said Jeannette, stopping short to wipe her flushed and overheated face. "Goodness, isn't it dreadfully hot all of a sudden? I had forgotten all about it, Wiggles. I remember now that he said that eight of the houses were quarantined. Isn't it too bad, for I'm so afraid we'll get caught in the rain if we take the long way home. Just look at that sky."

Heavy thunder-caps entirely concealed the blue, and bright flashes of lightning went zig-zagging across the heavens, while the low steady rumble of thunder was coming nearer and nearer.

"It does look bad," said Wiggles, "but it usually takes a long time to blow up, so let's scurry"; and two pairs of white-stockinged legs went flashing down the narrow path that led into the woods.

How dark it was! The overhanging trees completely shut out the little remaining light, and the path was too narrow for them to run rapidly.

Everything looked so changed. When they had gone through in the early afternoon, straying sunbeams had dappled leaves and tree-trunks with patches of golden light, and the slender white birches nodded and swayed in the gentle breeze. Then they had stopped to admire the huge feathery ferns, and to gather a few delicate wind-flowers that peeped through the grasses like tiny pink stars. Bright-eyed chipmunks had stared at them with beady black eyes, and chattered angrily when they came too near, disappearing up the tree-trunks like streaks of brown, and scolding shrilly from the branches overhead. Friendly gray squirrels had poked inquisitive heads through the green leaves, and scampered from branch to branch and tree to tree in a riotous game of tag.

Now bushes slapped angrily in their faces, and a frightened little rabbit scuttled in the bush, rushing to his bunny home before the storm broke; and a slippery snake wriggled across the path, as anxious to get out of their way as they were to have him.

And all the while it grew darker and darker.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OUT IN THE STORM

NEITHER of the children had ever feared electric storms, and had, indeed, rather enjoyed the majesty and grandeur of them. But being alone in a dark wood, when the thunder was growling and the vivid forks of lightning flashed across the sky, was vastly different from admiring the coming storm safely from their own cozy home.

They pelted along as fast as the curving path would allow, their hearts pounding with excitement and the rapid pace.

"It's raining already," cried Polly Wiggles in alarm, as a drop spattered on her cheek and was rapidly followed by another. "Oh, our organdie dresses!"

Oh, the organdie dresses indeed, for it was raining hard, and had been for several minutes, but the trees had proved a protection.

"Oh, Wiggles, I'm scared!" quavered Jean-

nette at a particularly loud clap of thunder. "There isn't a house we can go in until we reach the end of the woods, and Daddy always says that a forest is the worst place to be in an electric storm, as so many trees are struck. Whatever shall we do?"

"We can't *do* anything," responded Polly Wiggles in suspiciously shaky tones. "It's as black as a pocket, and I can hardly see you, so we wouldn't dare branch off anywhere, and it would take us just as long to try and go back to Miss Helen's as it would to keep on toward home. Isn't the lightning terrible? Nothing looks a bit natural, and I don't even know if we're on the path. It's so dark I can't see it at all, can you?"

There is always a moment of terrific stillness before a big storm breaks, followed by a high wind; and the trees groaned and shivered as the first blast of the gale twisted the limbs and whipped the branches, nearly taking away the children's breath. On top of it came a dreadful downpour that seemed as if the sky had opened, and in a twinkling both children were drenched

to the skin. That was just the beginning. For years afterward, that storm was to be talked about as the "big storm," for never had thunder and lightning been so intense, and never had the damage been so great.

The poor children were chilled through and through, and their sopping-wet clothing clung to them till their teeth chattered with the cold. The butterfly hair-ribbons had blown away long ago, and Wiggles' hair was a silky wet mass on her head, but Jeannette's long, wringing-wet curls were blown and twisted about her throat till it seemed as if cold, damp fingers were trying to choke her.

"Wiggles," panted Jeannette, trying to lift her voice above the blast of the gale and the thunder's boom, "we must get out of this woods or we'll be killed by a falling tree."

"Let's run till we come to that little clearing in the middle, and see if we can't get in that old coffee-mill," shouted Wiggles in reply, clinging to her sister.

Down the rough path, black as night, ran the little girls, slipping on the wet moss, bang-

ing into tree-trunks, slapped by the heavy branches, falling into the mud, picking themselves up, and struggling on. What would Mother and Daddy think if they knew their darlings were in such danger?

Wiggles' slipper, held by a little narrow strap, came off, and the poor child, unable to find it in the darkness, was forced to continue over cruel stones that cut her tender feet and made every step a torture.

Then, just when it seemed as if their panting little hearts could stand no more, there was a crash, and a ball of fire seemed to drop from the sky, while it felt as if the earth rose up and hit them.

. . . . . .

"I am so glad," remarked Mrs. Cole, "that the children said they would go home by the highway. This is the most terrific storm I ever remember, and the dear little mites would be paralyzed with fear if they were out in it a minute. I shudder at the idea of any one in those woods to-night. There is no doubt but that lightning has struck there several times. It looked as if

THERE WAS A CRASH, AND A BALL OF FIRE SEEMED TO DROP FROM THE SKY.—*Page 102.*

a ball of flame shot right down from the sky. I never would have believed that we could have such a severe storm so early in the season, but the weather has been unusually close."

Miss Helen walked about nervously.

"I am afraid I did wrong to let them return. I should have kept them here, but I never saw a storm spring up so rapidly," she replied in a troubled voice, drawn against her will to the window. "Oh, look at that flash,"—with a little scream. "I never saw anything like it in my life. Something was struck near by."

"I don't think you need worry at all about the children, Helen," returned her mother. "I should never forgive myself if they had been out in this, but they had ample time to reach home before the first drops fell. That highway cuts the distance in half, you know, for the wood-path curves and winds so, that it is far longer. Wasn't Elizabeth cunning? She simply beamed when you spoke about the May Frolic. I can just imagine them now, telling the others all about it."

"They are very dear children," agreed her

daughter warmly. "Jeannette is very much as her mother was, when she was a little girl. Personally I would love to have one of them for May Queen, but of course it would never do to show partiality, and the choice by vote is the only fair way. I am so nervous over them," she continued, "that I am going to call up and be assured they are safely home."

The telephone gave no response, for the storm had disconnected the wires, and it was fortunate for Miss Helen's peace of mind that she did not know the danger her little friends were in.

It was an experience to cause the stoutest heart to quail, let alone two children who had always been surrounded by the tenderest love and care. But in spite of Miss Helen's nervousness she never dreamed but that the children were safe at home, eating roast beef and mashed potatoes, and happily recounting the afternoon's visit to all the home folks.

The others just beat the storm, and the automobile drew up at The Lilacs as the first big drops pattered down.

"Haven't the children returned yet?" Mrs.

Eaton inquired with surprise as Hannah opened the front door.

"No, ma'am," responded Hannah. "I guess Miss Cole thought she'd better keep them till the storm was over. It's going to be a hard one, ma'am."

"I wants to see my Jet and Wiggles," piped up Cubby in a grieved voice.

"Undoubtedly they will stay with Helen," said Grandma with an anxious glance out of the window. "She knows that James can get them after the storm is over. Goodness, what a crash!" And there was a general run to close the windows as the rain came down in sheets.

Dr. Eaton and Grandpa Carr, who had been in the city all day, arrived next.

"Why, where are the youngsters?" inquired Grandpa, looking about in surprise. It seemed so unusually quiet without their happy voices and merry laughter.

"They went to Helen's for an afternoon tea-party," replied mother in a troubled voice, "and have not returned. I thought they would reach home long before us, but Helen makes such a

fuss over the children, that she has undoubtedly prepared some delightful surprise for them, that has kept them longer than usual. You know what lovely tea-parties the youngsters always have when they go there. Nothing is too much trouble for her, to give them a good time, and I remember she told me that there was something she was anxious to talk over with them. Still, I wish they were safely home. I like my little brood around me in a storm like this. Just hear that gale. It sounds as if it were hailing."

Daddy and Grandpa looked worried. It was not like the children to remain, if it was at all possible to return home, and the same thought was in each mind, although they said nothing to alarm the others.

"I'll just 'phone and tell them we'll be over later when the storm abates," said Daddy casually. "H'hm,—the line's out of order."

Grandfather was quietly getting out his raincoat and rubbers.

"Guess I'll take the car, and run over to Cole's now, even if the storm *is* pretty bad," said Daddy with a glance at Grandpa, who was slipping a

flashlight into his pocket. "Want to come along?"

Neither let himself think that there was the slightest possibility of the children being out in the storm, but both pulled on old caps and heavy wraps.

"Oh, if my babies were out in this!" shuddered Mother.

"It's not at all likely," soothed Grandpa. "They're undoubtedly at Helen's, as cozy as can be. Still, I'll just paddle along, too, and we'll make sure."

It was fortunate for their peace of mind that the folks at The Lilacs believed the little girls chattering with Miss Helen and her mother. Still, it was comforting to know that Daddy and Grandpa would soon whisk them home.

It was all the men could do to stand up, as they struggled out to the garage and climbed into the closed car. There was a tense line around Daddy's mouth, and Grandpa's ruddy face was white, as the powerful car whizzed along the muddy, slippery road, as fast as it could go with safety.

It seemed an age before the light from the little cottage-windows came in sight.

Miss Helen was surprised when Queenie opened the door to two dripping men, and she hastened out from the pantry, where she had been putting away the remains of the party.

"I suppose my two little girls are safely with you?" said Dr. Eaton, listening in vain for a sound of childish voices.

A horrified cry stopped him, and Miss Helen turned so white he thought she would faint.

"The children?" she gasped. "Haven't they reached The Lilacs yet? They left here almost an hour ago."

Mrs. Cole was as much alarmed as her daughter.

"Don't you think they have gone into one of the farmhouses on the highway?" she asked in a frightened voice. "I told them to be sure to go that way, as it was so short, and I thought they had plenty of time to reach home safely."

Dr. Eaton groaned. "I had already told them to use the path through the woods because of the scarlet-fever epidemic along the road," he

explained hurriedly. "That's probably what they have done. My poor babies! No, don't reproach yourself, Helen. They could have reached home easily by the highway. Have hot blankets and a hot drink ready, please. No one knows in what condition we shall find them."

The men plunged out into the night, leaving Miss Helen sobbing and wringing her hands.

And, oh, the weary search that was started through the pouring rain by Daddy and Grandpa. Where, oh, where, were the children?

When the terrible crash had occurred, the poor children had thought that their last moment had come. The earth rocked and they went crashing to the ground.

"Oh," screamed Jeannette, "that ball of fire!" But Wiggles lay white and silent for a while, almost stunned into unconsciousness.

Lightning had struck the tree right in back of them, and torn it in two. It was the very tree they had stood under while Wiggles had groped for her lost slipper a few minutes before.

While just a short distance away, a giant oak, one of the mighty monarchs of the forest, fell with a crash, fortunately away from the trembling children, or they would have been crushed to death.

"Jet, let's pray," gasped Elizabeth. So holding tightly to each other, the two little sisters asked that they might be kept from harm.

The very next flash of lightning showed them the clearing in the woods, and the ramshackle old mill that had been discarded years before. Into its poor shelter crept the thankful children, and there, in its dilapidated and dirty ruins, clasped in each other's arms, Grandpa and Daddy found them, almost dazed with the strain they had been under, and so weak they could hardly stand.

"I knew you'd come," gasped Wiggles hysterically, as clasped with Jeannette in Grandpa's arms, while Daddy drove carefully, they made the return trip.

The thunder wasn't quite so terrifying with Grandpa's coat-collar to snuggle against, although the men thought the journey would

never end, and their loved charges be safe from danger.

For years afterwards neither Daddy nor Grandpa could think of the search for the children without shuddering, and it was with thankful hearts that they saw the lights from Miss Helen's cottage-windows in the distance. In five minutes Wiggles and Jet, stripped of their soaking garments, were rubbed until they cried for mercy, and then wrapped in warm blankets. Then Daddy bandaged Wiggles' cut and swollen foot, and Miss Helen gave them big glasses filled with steaming-hot lemonade, which she made Grandpa and Daddy partake of as well, for they were soaked, too.

After the last sip had been taken, the little girls were wrapped in clothes miles too big for them, and wound about with blankets until they resembled two very large cocoons, and tucked away in the auto, with their wet clothes in a sodden pile at the back. Then, snuggling down by Grandpa with a sigh of content, they went whirling toward home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CUBBY PLAYS NURSE

SUCH a time as there was at The Lilacs when the two little wanderers were carried in. Mother, Grandma, and Aunt Elsie, of course, had thought them safe and sound at Miss Helen's. So, when Dr. Daddy splashed up the walk, carrying big bundles of what looked like old clothes, with rosy faces peeping out the top, there was a great hubbub.

"Any old clothes to-day,—any old clothes to-day?" chanted Grandpa in a sing-song voice, as Grandma stood with open mouth, gazing at the roll of bathrobes and quilts that surrounded Wiggles.

"Why-for you all rolled up like a itty (little) baby?" piped Cubby, scurrying wildly to and fro, and getting in every one's way.

"You poor little chickens!" exclaimed Mother

and Grandma together, as the story was incoherently poured out by both excited children at once. Aunt Elsie was frantically dashing from room to room, running hot baths, slipping hot-water bottles into the beds, and making everything ready for their comfort, while trying to listen with one ear to the account.

"They looked more like drowned rats than chickens," twinkled Daddy, appearing in the doorway with his blond hair on end, to see how preparations were going on. He could joke about it, now it was over, but it was a night he would never forget.

Oh, such hot baths as they were popped into, and such brisk rub-downs as they received! Then, as carefully as if they were bits of delicate porcelain, they were tucked into their cozy white beds and fed with delicious buttered toast and hot chocolate topped with whipped cream.

"Oh, it's so good to be home!" sighed Wiggles. "I thought I'd never see my pretty forget-me-not room again."

"Yes, doesn't it look homey and cozy," Jeannette replied, too comfortable even to turn her

head as she spoke. "If I were a cat, I'd purr, I'm so comfy."

"O dear, every bone in my body aches. I know now what people mean when they say that they 'feel limp as a dish-rag,' " returned Wiggles, stirring restlessly, "for I feel sort of all limpsy, and jelly-fishy, if you know what I mean. Ouch, my foot throbs like a toothache!"

"I know it must," Mother sympathized, appearing with a medicine-glass, "but the bandages that Daddy put on will soon make it better. Now I want you both to close your eyes and relax. Your nerves are all a-quiver from the shock, and you must calm down."

"Yes," agreed Wiggles uneasily, "I'll try. But when the wind goes 'Whoo-ooo' and the rain dashes against the pane, it makes me feel sort of shivery."

"And every time the lightning flares and the thunder growls, I think a tree's going to fall," quavered Jeannette. "I'll try to relax; I will honestly, Mother, but it seems to me it's an awfully *long* storm."

"And when I close my eyes I keep seeing the

trees swaying, and the zigzags of lightning against the black sky, and feel that dreadful falling—falling——"

"Don't think about it any more, Polly-Wiggles," said Daddy, popping his head in to see what all the chatter was about. "Take some of this medicine, and try to make your mind a blank. I'll pull down the shades so you can't see the rain, although I'm afraid you'll still have to hear it, as, unfortunately, the Weather Man isn't a friend of mine, and refuses to stop the downpour. You've been good little soldiers and obeyed instructions so far, and I'm proud of you, so try now to carry out orders."

As he spoke he slipped the screen about the beds and went out, closing the door softly. He was thinking with a shudder how the "carrying out instructions" might easily have caused their death.

I wish you could have seen those organdie dresses. Torn by bush and bramble, and covered with stains where the children had fallen, no one would have recognized the pathetic-looking rags as the dainty frocks the little maids

had started out in, looking so crisp and cool. All three ladies cried a bit at the tale the sodden garments mutely told.

The tired-out children fell asleep almost immediately, but in the middle of the night Jeannette was aroused by a loud whisper.

"Jet,—are you awake?"

"Yes. Does your foot hurt you, Wiggles? Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, just as comfy as can be," returned Wiggles, snuggling deeper into the soft bed and listening to the beating of the rain outside. "I was only thinking about our new organdie dresses. We were going to keep them so clean and fresh, and they must look like mud pies,"—with a little giggle. Wiggles' sense of humor could not be downed long.

Such lame, sore little girls as awoke next morning to a dreary world, for the storm had settled into a heavy downpour that flooded all outdoors.

Daddy was delighted to find that there were no signs of colds from the exposure, but declared

that bed for two or three days was his prescription, and that it would be the end of the week before school could be resumed.

"Well, anyway," yawned Jeannette, "we'll be back in time to vote for the King and Queen."

"And this will be a good time to write our verses for school," added the youthful poetess. "Ouchety, I'm so lame that I couldn't get out of bed if I wanted to. I must have what Mandy calls 'misery' in my back, and my foot burns like fire."

"I should think it would," said her sister sympathetically. "Oh-h,"—with a shudder,—" will you ever forget that 'crack-crack' that sounded when that tree was struck? I never shall."

"Doesn't it seem good to be safe at home," said Wiggles in a dreamy voice. "I'm so thankful that I'm not a snake and have to live in the woods all the while. Well, if here isn't Boots."

"Does Boots want to hear all about his sisters' adventures?" asked Jeannette, as the fluffy pussy jumped on the bed and patted her cheek gently with one velvet paw.

"He's just trying to tell you that breakfast is on its way," called Aunt Elsie, entering with a dainty tray, at which Boots licked his chops and fastened his green eyes intently upon the breakfast bacon.

"I'se done made you chilluns some 'jams' for breakfast," beamed fat Mandy, popping a woolly head in the door to inquire after her beloved 'white chilluns.' "But I disremembered prezactly if 'twas corn 'jams' or grahme 'jams' you-all liked best."

"Oh, *both,*" cried the invalids rapturously, sniffing with appreciation the steaming hot "gems" and strawberry jam that appeared. "No one can make them like you, Mandy."

"Well, I done reckon I knows how to cook, seeing as I'se had a skillet in one hand and a mixing spoon in t'other evah since I was knee-high to a grasshoppah," chuckled Mandy, rolling out, vastly pleased with herself. They could hear her throaty chuckle all the way down the hall, and her voice saying, "Yas, ma'am, I knew they'd like some o' my 'jams,' Miss Jean"; for

Mandy had been with the family ever since Grandma was a little girl, and never called Mother "Mrs. Eaton," but the "Miss Jean" of her girlhood days instead.

Cubby pattered in a few minutes later, to snuggle down on the bed beside Boots, and fasten wistful eyes on the strawberry jam, although she had already eaten her breakfast.

In spite of the continued storm on Monday, Mother had to go into the city with Daddy to make a visit to the dentist, as one of her teeth had been grumbling all night, and it would not do to leave it.

"You be a good little nurse to your sisters," she told Cubby, kissing them all good-by.

"Poor itty gurrls, so dreffle sick," mourned Cubby, trotting from one bed to the other, to put sympathetic kisses on each small sufferer's cheek, and greatly enjoying her own importance. It was very nice indeed to be the one in charge of the two older girls, instead of the other way about, for hadn't Mother told her to take care of them?

"Ouch, Cubby, don't lean against my back," squealed Jeannette. "It's so sore it feels as if it would break in two."

"Want me to give 'oo an al-colic rub?" volunteered the baby nurse, remembering the cooling alcohol sponges given to her when ill.

"No, thank you, Miss Nurse," answered Jeannette, entering into the play. "I'm afraid you're too little. Say, Woggsie, if Cub is a really-truly nurse, she ought to wear a uniform."

"Sure enough," returned that ingenious young lady. "Let me think. Cubby, you go get me two of Daddy's handkerchiefs and I'll fix you all up."

Nothing loath, the wee bear left the room, to return in a few minutes with a beaming face, followed by Aunt Elsie with a little white apron and a scrap of white lawn in her hand.

"I thought I could fix up your nurse for you," she suggested, pinning the lawn into a "sugar-bowl" cap, and fastening it to Cubby's golden curls. One of Daddy's handkerchief's, folded and placed about her neck like a fichu, was ad-

justed next, and when the white apron-strings were tied about the plump little waist, the cunningest nurse stood before them that any patient could hope to have.

"I'se a horse-pital nurse," announced Cubby, flying to look in the mirror.

"And we are your patients," replied Jeannette. "Oh, nurse, nurse, I feel so ill. My fever is so high that my face has scorched the pillow."

Cubby cast a startled glance at the pillow-slip, and then carefully felt her patient's pulse.

"Derry, derry (very) sick," said she with a frown, "with 'tile parenthis," meaning infantile paralysis.

"I have a fever in my feet," announced Wiggles with a realistic groan that sent Cubby scurrying to her in alarm, "and my heart has stopped beating entirely."

"I'll cut you open with the sciddors (scissors), like this," said the nurse in a bloodthirsty manner, snipping her fingers up and down like a pair of shears, "and then you'll be all wite after the apperation."

The third patient, who was purring loudly on the foot of Wiggles' bed, was carefully looked over next.

"Him's pults (pulse) derry bad," mourned Cubby, holding one soft paw in her little hand.

"He has the 'cat-tar,' like Grandpa has," explained Wiggles. "That's the reason he snores. I do wonder why they named a disease after a cat. I must remember to ask Daddy."

"Well, what does Nursie suggest for her little patients?" smiled Grandma, entering with a vase of golden daffodils that Marion's grandmother had brought to the children.

"An al-colic rub," replied Cubby firmly, "and some itty sugar pills."

"That's a very good prescription," answered Grandma, kissing the wee nurse. "And you are looking after your sisters very well."

"Oh," replied that small damsel sweetly, "I don't mind 'musing them for a little while, Grandma."

They all laughed at this, for it seemed to be rather the other way about, but Cubby's responsible air was too funny for anything.

"Aunt Elsie is downstairs with Mrs. West," went on Grandma; "and I think, Cubby, that you had better run down and show them your costume while your patients take a nap until luncheon time. I am going to lie down myself, for my head aches rather badly, so the nurse may have an hour off duty."

So the windows were opened wide to let in the fresh air, and Grandma tucked the little girls in their cozy nests for a little "snooze," and then went out, taking Cubby with her.

Now Cubby had every intention of going directly downstairs into the library with Mrs. West and Aunt Elsie, so Grandma, after watching her trot down the broad stairway, went into her own room to rest.

But at the foot of the stairs was Dr. Daddy's office, past which Cubby must go to reach the library, which was at the front of the big house, and a naughty idea popped into her mind as she peeped in the open door.

The girls had said that she was too little to give an alcohol rub, but her own Grandma hadn't laughed, and had indeed seemed to think it a

good idea. She just guessed that she would show them that she wasn't a baby after all.

So into Daddy's office she tiptoed quietly, although it was the one place in the house where the children were forbidden to go.

" 'Cause," whispered she, to soothe her guilty conscience, "I *must* get the 'al-colic.' "

Onto a tall chair she climbed, to reach the big bottles that stood on top of the glass case. Fortunately, Cubby knew better than to touch, or give to any one else, the pills of different colors, that looked so fascinating, even if some of the white dots did taste like "sugar-bowls," as she called lump sugar. Daddy had instilled that "do not taste" idea very thoroughly in her baby mind, so now it was only the alcohol for which she searched, remembering the big bottle in which she had seen it when she had a "rub."

"I'se my dear Muvver's itty helper," murmured she to herself, teetering back and forth on the high chair. "Won't Muvver be 'sprised when she sees what I'se a-goin' to do?"

She would indeed.

"Seems to be nuffin here but pills," she went

on in disgust, for Daddy's big case, of course, was locked. Then suddenly her bright eyes spied a large bottle within easy reach of her eager little hands, on Daddy's desk. Down she clambered, catching her white apron on the chair-back, and tearing a large hole.

"Such a tender apron," she mourned, sticking her fist through the hole, and, of course, enlarging it.

All bottles containing liquid looked the same to the wee nurse, so, with a struggle, she hastily uncorked it and took a sniff.

"Smells bitter," she declared, turning up her little nose and making a face, for anything of which she did not like the smell or taste was "bitter" to her.

The bottle happened to contain cod-liver oil, but this, of course, she did not know, and took it for granted that it was the desired alcohol.

It was an awkward shape to carry, and it took great perseverance to lug it up the long staircase, but, quiet as a creeping mouse, the little figure stole along.

In the library she could hear Mrs. West and

Aunt Elsie chatting about the storm, and she hardly dared breathe until safely upstairs, where she peeked softly in the bedroom door.

Both Jeannette and Elizabeth were sleeping soundly, with Boots snoozing happily beside them.

With a satisfied gleam in her mischievous brown eyes, Cubby slipped stealthily in, and closed the door.

SHE HASTILY UNCORKED IT AND TOOK A SNIFF.—*Page 125.*

CHAPTER NINE

THE RESULTS

WIGGLES was dreaming uneasily. She thought she was running along through the woods, when her foot slipped and she fell down,—down, into a slimy marsh, and, no matter how hard she struggled, she could not get out, but felt the sticky-oozy mud all about her.

Jeannette dreamed, too. It seemed as if she were in the kitchen, and colored Mandy was teaching her to make gems. She had the batter all mixed, and Mandy held the yellow bowl full of the mixture to show her how to pour it into the tiny muffin-tins. But, instead of pouring it where it belonged, Mandy upset the entire sticky mass all over Jeannette, and she could feel the clammy stuff trickling down her back.

Boots likewise dreamed, but I cannot begin to

tell you what he dreamed about, except to say that it was a dreadful, *dreadful* "cat-mare."

Mrs. Eaton returned at twelve, with her tooth all fixed. Mrs. West was just leaving, and so Aunt Elsie and Mother ran up the stairs together. Grandmother met them at the top, to inquire about the toothache.

"The children have been taking a nap," she said, "and so have I. They must be getting a nice rest, for everything is so quiet—" and at that, bedlam broke out in the forget-me-not room, and cat-yowls and children's excited voices could be heard together.

"Mother, Mother," shrieked Wiggles. "I think Boots must be having a fit, and we're all stuck up."

"What does the child mean?" gasped Grandma. All three ladies made a dash to open the door into the children's room, as the enraged Boots, looking a queer spectacle, shot out, spitting violently.

"That's not a fit," cried Aunt Elsie, "he's just plain angry. What can that be that he has all over him?"

"For pity's sake, children, what have you been doing?" asked Mrs. Eaton in amazement. "Can these be my little girls?"

No wonder she asked, for Jeannette's long curls were a glued-together mass down her back, and the backs of both children's night-clothes were dripping with a thick, sticky substance.

A small figure in white arose from the floor, from between the beds, where it had been sitting, "on duty," as a nurse should be.

"I gaved 'em an al-colic rub," said Cubby triumphantly.

"Alcohol nothing," exclaimed Aunt Elsie, gingerly picking up the large bottle the "nurse" still clasped. "Cod-liver-oil, instead."

"What is all the racket about?" inquired Daddy from the doorway, and gave an astonished glance at his little daughters.

"So that's where my cod-liver-oil bottle disappeared, is it? Well, well, I never realized you children were so fond of it that you used it to bathe in."

"Cubby, you scamp—," began Mother

severely, but was stopped by an anguished wail from the wee nurse. "I—I fought it was alcolic," she hiccoughed, "and I wanted to hel—lup."

Of course the first thing to be done was to pop the children into the tub. Mother took Wiggles, and Aunt Elsie, Jeannette, and into the big bath-tub they were dipped for more rubbing and scrubbing.

"Aren't we the most mis-fortunate children you ever saw?" sighed Wiggles, as she was soused up and down. "Ouch, you're taking my skin off, too!"

"I may have to," Mrs. Eaton said grimly. "I never saw such stuff to scrape off. Never mind, chickabiddies, it might have been worse, for Cub might have taken glue."

Grandma, swathed in a large rubber apron, was dipping the wee culprit into the big foot-tub, shaped like a sea-shell, for Cubby had liberally besmeared herself as well.

"The soap's in my face," howled Cubby, who was struggling violently.

"Well, the cod-liver oil's in mine," said Jean-

nette savagely, having the hardest time of them all, as Mother and Aunt Elsie worked over the long curls.

Down in the basement it was a question as to who was having the worse time,—Boots or Dr. Eaton. Cats hate water, and poor Dr. Eaton had to scrub pussy vigorously in the stationary tubs, to get the thick fur back to its usual state.

"Meow, meow!" went poor Boots, and "scrub, scrub" went the Doctor, both looking very unhappy, for Boots had struggled until the front of Dr. Eaton's suit was all spattered with soapy water.

Hannah was changing the messy bed, with many shakes of her head over the antics of "dat naughty lamb."

At last the youngsters were tucked safely away once more, and long-suffering Mother departed to change her dress.

Fifteen minutes later a chastened Boots strolled in, looking so thin and forlorn, with his fluffy fur all slicked down, that the children screamed with laughter.

"Oh, oh, I know just how he feels," gasped Wiggles, "for I never want to see a scrubbing-brush again."

Aunt Elsie fixed him a cushion by the window, where an occasional sunbeam tried to peep in, and little by little his hair fluffed out anew.

Then sorrowful wails were heard, and Cubby entered, both hands wrapped round and round with long bandages until they looked like well-stuffed pincushions and were impossible to use.

" 'Cause my paddies were naughty," sobbed she, burying her head like a little ostrich in Aunt Elsie's lap, "and that's the 'why.' "

"Naughty little hands that get into mischief have to be punished so they will remember not to touch things they should not, again," said Mother seriously. "Don't you think so, Elsie?"

"I do, indeed," Aunt Elsie replied gravely, stifling an impulse to hug the naughty little culprit, who howled afresh at Auntie's words.

"Does she have to have pincushion hands long?" asked the sisters sorrowfully, for they hated to see the baby bear punished.

"Until dinner-time," replied Dr. Eaton.

"She *must* realize how very naughty it was to touch any of Daddy's medicines. It might have been acid, or something that would have really injured you, instead of just making you feel uncomfortable."

"I'se sorry," wept the small sinner, with huge crocodile tears raining down her rosy face.

"What are you sorry about?" questioned Daddy, taking her on his knee.

"I loves 'oo," cajoled the artful baby, smoothing her father's hair as best she could with her pudding-like hands, and planting a kiss on his cheek.

"Yes," replied Dr. Eaton unmoved, wishing to make certain that she fully understood why she was punished. "But what are you sorry about?"

"Why, why," murmured she, "I'se sorry 'cause I can't do what I wants to do any more."

Dr. Eaton hastily turned away his head. She looked so little and cunning sitting there, bolt upright, on his knee, with her golden curls nodding, and the ridiculous pudding-like bandages on each little hand, that it was hard to continue

the punishment. It was easy to see that she didn't understand at all why she was being punished, so for a long time he talked to her in simple words, explaining how she might have badly hurt her sisters by her disobedience, and, when the luncheon-bell sounded, she showed that she really understood.

I don't believe I have told you about the big double room that the sisters shared at The Lilacs. It was such a pretty room that it was a pleasure just to lie in bed and look around, while the others were eating their luncheon. The walls were a soft, cloudy blue, and an artist friend of Grandpa's had painted blue and yellow butterflies and bees, sipping at festoons of forget-me-nots, in a dainty border around the ceiling. The children loved to rest quietly and look at them, they were so pretty.

The furniture was white, with twin beds for the little girls; and the windows were draped with the prettiest cretonne, up which pink buds and blue forget-me-nots clambered, while blue rag rugs on the floor had tiny pink and blue posies woven in the border. The white furni-

ture was painted with sprays of forget-me-nots, while bed-spreads of the same cretonne as that which draped the windows, covered the beds when the children were not in them.

The girls were both much surprised when Mother and Aunt Elsie rolled their beds together, and then placed a bed-table over them, which was covered with a dainty white cloth. Then, instead of the usual individual trays, Grandma set the children's places with the dearest little blue tea-set you can imagine.

"Where did you get them, Grandma?" demanded Jeannette, examining the pictures on each side with much interest.

"That set belonged to Jean and Elsie," replied Grandma, filling a tiny chocolate-pot as she spoke, and placing cold sliced chicken on the tea-plates.

"Our own mother and Auntie, when they were little girls," declared Wiggles with satisfaction, starting her luncheon with much zest. "It tastes lots better on these than on ordinary dishes. Just look at those lovely gooey marshmallow cakes that Mandy baked for us, Jet."

"I'm going to do more than *look,*" returned Jet with spirit, and biting into one as she spoke. "Yum-yum, these are a treat. She's put chopped cherries in the marshmallow cream inside, and they're *heavenly.*"

"She calls them angelettes. It's her own name for them. I remember these dishes well," Mrs. Eaton continued with a laugh. "Helen Cole used to come over here and have tea-parties on them when we were about your age, and even younger. We always had sponge cake and lemonade, and two striped peppermint candies apiece. It seems as if I ought to have some now."

"Did Aunt Elsie play tea-party, too?"

Mother cast a mischievous smile at her sister, who laughed as if recalling something funny.

"Oh, what is it?" cried Wiggles. "I can see by the twinkle in your eye that there is a joke."

"Well," replied Mother, industriously darning socks, "your Aunt Elsie was my baby sister, as you know, and she was only two years old at the time we started our tea-parties. She simply adored the chocolate-pot in that set, and, every

chance she got, she would steal it and hide under the dining-room table with it."

"I'm s'prised that you were such a little mischief," remarked Wiggles, demurely.

"One afternoon Helen and I had been playing dolls on the veranda, when Mother came to the door to tell us that the tea-party was all ready. We always had our tea-parties on a little white table on the side porch, but when we reached the table, the chocolate-pot, full of lemonade, had disappeared, although all the other refreshments were untouched. It was the first time that Elsie had found the opportunity to take it when it was filled, but it really wasn't the lemonade she wanted, it just seemed as if the chocolate-pot itself fascinated her.

"Of course we rushed right out to the dining-room, and there, under the big table, was Elsie, clasping it in her two little hands and gulping down the contents from the spout as fast as she could swallow.

"I can see her yet, with her long golden curls hanging down over her shoulders, and the lemonade smeared all over her face and hands,

and down the front of her white frock, but with the most angelic expression on her face you can imagine."

"Imagine Aunt Elsie being so naughty," laughed Jeannette. "Why, she must have been as mischievous as Cubby."

"She was every bit as bad, and maybe worse," said Grandma with a smile. "In fact, Cubby puts me very much in mind of her. It seemed to me as if she went from one piece of mischief to another as fast as she could go. Many and many a time she has had pudding-hands, just like the wee bear, and I have even known her feet to be tied up because she would go 'visiting,' unknown to me."

"Why, Aunt Elsie, weren't you dreadful? Won't you please tell us some more stories about when she was a little girl, Grandma?"

"Oh, do," urged Jeannette. "Daddy says we mustn't read in bed, and, though I'm so tired of lying still, I'm too lame to get up."

"How would you like to come in my room for a little change?" asked Grandma. "You

could be together in my big double bed, and I will tell you some stories, if you like."

"O goody, that would be lovely!" cried both children.

They clambered out of bed with many grunts of pain, and slipped into blue bedroom slippers and warm blue corduroy bath-robes.

Then, led as usual by Boots, the little party scurried across the hall to Grandmother's lilac room.

CHAPTER TEN

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY-QUILT

EACH bedroom at The Lilacs was done in a different color. Jeannette and Elizabeth had one of the back bedrooms, overlooking the stream and orchard, while Aunt Elsie's room, all pale pink with ivory furniture, was right next door.

Dr. and Mrs. Eaton had the yellow-and-white room, with its buff walls, white furniture, and daisy-strewn cretonne. This was one of the big front rooms, and from it opened a wee bit of a room, not much larger than a playhouse, which Cubby proudly claimed as her very own.

But Grandmother's room the children all thought the very best of all. This was the other large front bedroom, opening from Cubby's tiny nest. From the windows one could see the brick-pathed, old-fashioned flower garden, bordered with lilac hedges and syringa bushes,

while right across the road was "White Birches," the beautiful estate that had been closed for so many years, and whose velvety terraces sloped down to the crystal-clear waters of Willow Lake. It was the most beautiful estate in Meadowbrook, and the children never grew tired of admiring the beautiful grounds and little rustic bridge that spanned the Lake. Wonderful little summer-houses dotted the edge of the water, and one, more daring than the rest, rose like a monstrous white water-lily out of the very waters, and could be approached by boat or stepping-stones.

The children never tired of hearing about when Mother was a little girl, and had played with another little girl named Marie Deering, whose parents had owned White Birches for many years. Many years later the place was closed, and Mrs. Eaton lost track of her friend, to her great sorrow.

Wiggles and Jet had woven all kinds of romances about the place. They loved to play that it was an enchanted palace, and that, until the Fairy Prince, on his white charger, drank

thrice of the magic waters of Willow Lake, the house would stand idle, with closed doors and drawn shades. But as soon as the prince quaffed the crystal waters, the palace would stir to life, and a beautiful princess would appear, who would graciously invite "Miss Elizabeth and Miss Jeannette" over to play dolls in the fascinating summer-houses, and to ride on the prince's white charger.

It was an interesting fancy, and enlivened many a rainy day.

"O dear! why couldn't White Birches be open, with a little girl to play with us now," sighed Wiggles wistfully, as she pressed her nose against the pane in Grandma's front window, and stared across at the "Enchanted Palace," as they called it.

"Hurry up children, skip into bed," said Grandma. "We don't want you to catch cold, and it's still very damp."

"I just love your room, Grandma," said Wiggles, as she scampered away from the window. "It's so restful, and quiet-looking."

It was a restful room, as Elizabeth said. The furniture was of French gray, with big cuddly wicker-chairs upholstered in the prettiest lilac-strewn cretonne. The walls were papered in the softest shade of lavender, with a deep border of lilac sprays. The children always called this "The Lilac Room," while Mother's was named "The Daisy Room," and tall crystal vases filled with the starry yellow-and-white flowers stood on her dresser and table during all the summer months

"The Rosery" belonged to Aunt Elsie, and was named from the baskets of roses that tumbled their crinkly petals down the pink walls from the border above.

Of course Jet and Polly Wiggles called their own particular sanctum "The Forget-me-not Room," and Cubby insisted on calling her spot, "The Nest," although, as the older girls pointed out, "Who ever heard of a bear-cub sleeping in a nest? It ought to be 'The Den,' or 'The Cubby-Hole.'"

However, it was very convenient to have each

room named, for Mother could say: "Trot upstairs and see if I left my gloves in the Nest. If not, I dropped them on the floor of the Rosery."

Or Grandmother would call, "Will you see if I left my glasses on the Daisy bed?"

It was very comfortable to cuddle down in Grandmother's downy bed, and to be tucked about with the huge quilt made of silk patchwork squares, which Grandma pulled out of her roomy closet.

Aunt Elsie and Mother brought their sewing and settled themselves comfortably in the wicker-chairs, while Grandmother knitted busily on a pink sweater she was making for the wee bear. Cubby, still feeling greatly disgraced, curled down in a little ball by her sisters, while Boots jumped on the arm of Grandmother's chair, and watched her knitting with interest, occasionally stretching one lazy paw to catch at the wool in a languid effort at play.

"You said you'd tell us some stories," reminded Jeannette, snuggling down with a little wriggle of content.

"I brought out my story-quilt purposely for you," replied Grandma, with a little nod toward the patchwork covering that billowed about the children.

"Your story-quilt? Doesn't that sound interesting? What do you mean?" asked Wiggles, gazing with eyes like full moons at the bright-colored silk and satin squares and triangles.

So Grandmother explained that almost every piece in that patchwork had a story connected with it, and how she had made the quilt herself out of left-over scraps of material that had an interest for her. "You choose any square you wish," she advised, "and if it has any kind of a story at all, I'll tell you all about it."

Many of the silks looked odd to the children's eyes, with the old-fashioned designs so different from those of the present day, while some of the materials were so old that the silk had worn into tattered ribbons.

Finally, after pausing undecided before several that looked interesting, Jeannette pointed

to a square of white silk, with a pattern of scarlet checkerberries woven in it, and said, "I choose that one."

"I must have been about Cubby's age," said Grandmother, "when I had that dress. Children in those days did not wear thin dresses, like you little ones do nowadays, except in hot weather, for the houses were not so well heated in the winter. Instead, we wore thick woolen dresses all winter, as soon as we could walk, that is, for everyday use, with silk ones for our very best, and over our dresses we usually wore black silk aprons."

"Black silk aprons?" echoed Wiggles. "Why, Grandma, how funny."

"It didn't look at all funny then, my dear, when every one else was wearing them, too," explained Grandmother, smiling at the children's horror.

"We lived in those days in the center of the city, and I had a nice little room which opened from my parents' room, down two little steps, for many of the old-fashioned houses had steps between one room and another."

"Why was that, Grandma?" inquired Jeannette.

"I'm sure I don't know, my dear. It always seemed a very foolish waste of footsteps to me, and a dangerous way of spraining ankles. For instance, in our home you had to go down two steps into the bathroom from the hall. To enter father's library, you climbed up three steps from the double parlors, and, as I said, there were steps between Mother's room and mine. Of course, if you opened a door suddenly, and forgot those little steps, you bumped your nose pretty badly.

"I remember my mother's dressing me in this new white dress, with the sprays of berries on it, which was trimmed with rows and rows of narrow cherry-colored velvet ribbon; and putting on my long striped stockings that had cherry-colored stripes to match my frock, running round and round like peppermint stick-candy. It was really a very pretty outfit for those days, and I felt very much dressed up indeed. My flaxen hair was pulled straight back and held in place with a large round comb, and then frizzed

out behind, just down to the collar of my dress.

"I know I felt very proud of myself, and looked in the long, gilt-edged mirror that hung in the parlor between two horsehair chairs, with a great deal of satisfaction."

"Didn't you feel dreadfully in such funny striped stockings, Grandmother?"

"Not half so funny as I would have felt if I had had to wear socks. I should have been shocked to wear such things, for they were unknown, and would have looked just as queer to our eyes as striped stockings look to yours."

"May I pick out a square now?" asked Wiggles eagerly.

"Yes, it's your turn next," replied Grandma, catching Boots just in time, as he tangled her pink worsted in two playful paws and prepared to have a fine frolic.

"Him's naughty puss-cat," said Cubby severely. "Him ought to have him's pawsies tied up, too."

"So he should," laughed Mother, "only I'm afraid he'd understand the reason even less than

you did, and I think, Babykins, that your bandages may come off in another half-hour."

"Have you decided yet?" asked Grandmother, as Wiggles paused uncertainly between two pretty pieces.

"I think I'll choose this dark gray square with the bunches of scarlet cherries in it," she said at last. "Has it a story, Grandma?"

"Yes, indeed. It's another short one, a story about your own mother when she was a very tiny girl, and went to the World's Fair at Chicago."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHEN MOTHER WAS A LITTLE GIRL

"YOUR mother was just three years old when your grandfather and I took her on the trip to Chicago and the World's Fair, and through the 'Soo' to Mackinac Island by boat. It was a long trip for such a little child, but Jean was a remarkably good baby, and traveled wonderfully well."

"I can still remember the huge Ferris Wheel at the Fair," put in Mother, as Grandma paused; "but everything else is a blur."

"Did Aunt Elsie go, too?" inquired Jeannette with interest.

"There wasn't an Aunt Elsie in those days," replied Grandma, with a smile, "and so we had only the one little girl to take.

"Jean was such a pretty child that I was very proud of her, and every one used to turn around

to look at her on the street. She had great big dark eyes like Jeannette, and short chestnut-brown hair that she wore in a deep bang over her forehead."

"And what did she wear, Grandmother?" asked Wiggles with interest.

"She wore a dress of that very material, Polly Wiggles, that you have chosen,—dark gray with bunches of scarlet cherries scattered over it, and a dark red coat with a big cape collar. Of course her dresses were long, as it was fashionable at that time for little girls to have frocks down to their ankles."

"Just imagine," cried Jet in horror. "How funny she must have looked. Did she wear pantalettes, too?"

Both Jeannette and Wiggles had read of the fancy pantalettes that were worn by the children in olden days.

Grandmother and Mother both had to stop their work and laugh, while Cubby joined in, although she hadn't the slightest idea what the joke was about.

"Why, what's so funny?" chorused the chil-

dren, surprised at the mirth Jet's remark had caused.

"My dear children," gasped Grandma, "excuse us for laughing, but they didn't even wear pantalettes in *my* childhood days. It was away back in your great-grandmother's time when those were worn, so of course Jean did not have them."

"Oh, 'way back in the dark ages," exclaimed Wiggles so seriously that both Grandma and Mother started laughing anew.

"Jean wore the cunningest little scoop bonnet of shirred red silk," went on Grandma, resuming her tale, "and she certainly was a picture with her rosy cheeks and great dark eyes. On her feet she had little strapped black slippers, and her dress was made with two pockets, in one of which she carried a tiny silk handkerchief embroidered in red cherries. It is the same one that you have in your doll trunk to-day, Wiggles.

"Jean was very funny on the boat, and not a bit afraid of the water; in fact, she was as good as a kitten most of the time, and a great pet with all the passengers, although she was very shy

and did not make friends easily. There was one man, a Mr. Sam Brown, who played with her a great deal. He was a tall, very thin gentleman, with a little goatee, and I suppose hearing him called 'Sam' confused her, so that she associated him in her mind with the cartoons of 'Uncle Sam' in the newspapers, and insisted on calling him 'Uncle Ham,' much to his amusement. For Jean talked very, very crooked, and when we first reached Chicago she called it 'He-cargo,' while when we returned she had changed it to 'She-cargo.'

"Several things happened on board boat that were laughable, and once I was very thankful that she talked so crookedly that no one could understand her.

"There was a lady on board who really annoyed the child with attentions, asking her questions every minute, and keeping at her constantly to hear her funny talk, until Jean took a great dislike to her and wouldn't have anything to say at all. One morning she had been teasing Jean for a long time, asking, over and over again, what her name was, and where she lived,

and all kinds of things. But not a word would Jean utter. Finally the lady said, 'Why won't you talk to me, Jean?'

"' 'Cause,' Jean said decidedly in the sweetest little voice, 'you're too "inquissia."' "

"*What* did she mean?" asked both children in astonishment.

"That was what the lady tried to find out. The child meant, 'inquisitive,' and it was the nearest she could pronounce it. I really couldn't blame her, but for once I was most thankful for her crooked tongue.

"It was the same afternoon that she played a trick on me that might have turned out seriously. I had gone with her to our stateroom to dress for dinner. I dressed her in her little red frock first, and she played busily around the room by herself while I was combing my hair. She had a great fondness for opening and shutting doors, so she slipped in and out of the room into the corridor several times, fussing with the key and turning the knob, and not making a bit of trouble. I was just slipping into my gown for

dinner, when, after fumbling with the lock, she cried triumphantly, 'I'se locked you in.'

"I thought, of course, that she was just playing, for she had never before turned a key, and the lock on our door worked very hard; but in some way or other her busy little fingers had managed it, and there I was, tightly locked in my stateroom while my mischievous baby was outside, free to go as she pleased.

"Of course I rushed over and tried the door, only to hear her feet pattering rapidly down the passage-way, although I called her to come back. I was nearly frantic. Her father was on deck, talking to some acquaintances, but it was not at all likely that Jean would go anywhere near him, now that she had this unexpected liberty, and of course he believed we were together in our room. No one could tell where she might take it into her head to roam, and it seemed as if my heart would stop beating as I thought of the possibility of her going on deck alone, and maybe falling overboard."

"Why didn't you 'phone the office?" asked

Wiggles in much surprise, with a recollection of the telephone service in the hotel room when she had once stayed over night in New York.

"You must remember that we didn't have all those conveniences then," replied Grandma, "and the boats on the 'Soo' were not up-to-date, even for those times.

"I pounded and pounded on my door, hoping some one would hear me, but it was a long while before any one chanced by, and when I called out my predicament, it was discovered that naughty Jean had not only locked me in, but had taken the key with her as well."

"Oh, Mother," cried both little girls, "what ever made you do it?"

"I'm sure I couldn't tell you," laughed Mrs. Eaton, "for I was so little that I haven't the faintest recollection of it at all."

"Fortunately," continued Grandmother, "Grandfather—only he wasn't a grandfather then—had wondered why we were gone such an unusually long time, so, as I was explaining mat-

ters he came along, and of course hurried right out to hunt up the naughty little runaway immediately, and get the key to release me.

"He found Jean on deck with another little girl, having a beautiful time eating oranges, of which she was very fond. He was very much relieved to find her safe and sound, and snugly tucked in her tiny pocket was the key. I had been locked in that stateroom an hour while she roamed around as she wished and explored the boat. It was most fortunate that she didn't get into worse mischief."

Both children were greatly diverted, and were just going to beg for another story, when Grandpa appeared in the doorway with a big paper package tucked under his arm.

"How are the little invalids?" he cried heartily. "You chickabiddies gave me a scare. I looked in your room, and you had gone, but I thought I heard a busy twittering down this way, and, sure enough, I find you've flown over to a new roost. Here is something warranted to keep you busy and out of mischief to-morrow,"

—and he tossed the big parcel on the bed, where it was eagerly pounced upon by the little girls.

Cubby hastily put both bandaged hands behind her, but Grandpa saw them just the same as he leaned over to kiss her.

"Why, what's all this?" he inquired. "Why the little pincushions? Have they been naughty paddies?"

A mute nod was the answer, as Cubby burrowed her curly head in his waistcoat.

"I think that they have been punished enough," said Mrs. Eaton, leaning over to smooth the golden locks.

So Grandpa undid roll after roll, until the mischief-making pink snips of hands came into sight once more, and, with a rainbow smile, the wee bear scurried over to look at the interesting big bundle her sisters were unwrapping with many squeals of delight.

Inside was package after package of tissue and crêpe paper in every color and shade imaginable, and when they saw the pinks and the yellows, the dainty lavender and blues, they jounced up and down in the big bed until

Grandpa declared that they had better "go easy" or he would have to sleep on the floor that night.

Of course all the basket patterns had been lost during the thunder-storm, but Miss Helen had called Sunday morning to inquire after the children, and had brought over plenty more, so they could make as many shapes and varieties of baskets as they wished.

"Oh, you darling Grandpa!" declared Wiggles, giving him a hug that nearly strangled him, while Jeannette and Cubby joined in until there was a great powwow.

"We've been hearing about how naughty Mother used to be," said Wiggles with glee. Truth to tell, she had been greatly pleased to find that she wasn't the only one who got into funny scrapes. "We heard all about the time when she locked Grandma in her stateroom."

Grandpa leaned over and examined the quilt closely.

"Look here, youngsters," he said. "Here's a piece of your Grandmother's wedding dress, and this is a snip from the very plaid necktie that I

was wearing when I first spoke to the little girl who many years later became my wife, and who is now your Grandmother."

"Oh, do tell us," implored Jet.

"Yes, do," coaxed Polly-Wiggles.

"I shall never forget that day," went on Grandpa, with a teasing smile at the expectant faces before him.

"Grandfather Carr, that's mean just to tease us! Please tell us," implored both children, snarly black curls and smooth brown ones bent together over the fascinating story-quilt.

"You youngsters want to remember that you are invalids, and must not be excited," returned Grandpa gravely, looking from one sparkling face to the other. "You must lie down quietly in a darkened room——"

"Grandpa Carr, you mean tease!" put in Jet, reading the twinkle in his eye.

"—and not be disturbed by *any* conversation——"

Two deep groans interrupted him.

"—and have gruel and dry toast for your sup-

per," went on Grandpa gravely, watching the expression of disgust on each face.

"Ugh. Gruel—we *hate* it."

"And," he continued as if there had been no interruption, "possibly by next week, or the week after, if you follow these directions *most* carefully, you will be strong enough to stand hearing me tell a story."

"*Grandpa!* Next week or the week after! Aren't you awful!"

"I only said *possibly* even then," reminded Grandfather, who dearly loved to tease.

"We won't make you any May-baskets," Wiggles said mischievously. "And just think how your heart would break at that."

"Dear me, if that's the case I'd better look over that quilt again," exclaimed Grandpa in mock alarm. "But remember, youngsters, if you should have a collapse, that I warned you."

"We'll be *warned,*" giggled Wiggles, imitating her grandfather's doleful tone and greatly enjoying his nonsense.

"Well, bless my soul. If there isn't the very

first valentine I ever sent to your grandmother when she was a little girl. Gracious, Elizabeth,"—speaking to Grandma,—"to think that you have kept it all these years."

"Of course I have," Grandmother returned spiritedly. "It was painted on white silk, and so I could easily sew it in my memory-quilt."

The children hung entranced over the faded silk valentine, where two clasped hands were painted above a wreath of forget-me-nots, with the rhyme,

"Through rain, through snow, through sun and shine,
Sweet Valentine, will you be mine?"

in tarnished gold letters beneath.

"Oh, do go on and tell us about when you met Grandma," reminded Wiggles, giving him an impatient nudge. "It's just like a story-book."

"Yes, and my fever is rising rapidly from the excitement of *not* hearing," laughed Jeannette.

"Dear me, if that's the case, I'd better start at once. It wasn't what you might call a regular introduction, when I first met your grandma,"

said Grandfather, with a reluctant grin tugging at the corners of his mouth; "and it wasn't the first time I had seen her and admired her either, although I didn't know her to speak to."

"Indeed it wasn't," retorted Grandma serenely. "You were always standing on your head, and turning somersaults, to make me look at you when I was anywhere around; and acting up and showing off in all kinds of silly ways."

"Grandpa! Showing off, and 'acting silly,' —imagine!" murmured Wiggles, patting his hand. "Do go on, Grandpa,—we're listening."

CHAPTER TWELVE

GRANDPA TELLS A STORY

"I FIRST saw Elizabeth Little in school," started Grandfather.

"*Who* was Elizabeth Little?" inquired Wiggles, much puzzled.

"There's Elizabeth Little Carr, sitting over by the window knitting Cubby a sweater," explained Grandfather Carr, nodding toward pretty Grandmother. "She wasn't Mrs. Carr until after I persuaded her to marry me, which was many years later, for when I first saw her she was just a little schoolgirl. I thought 'Little' was exactly the right name for her, for she was the tiniest little flaxen-haired sprite you can imagine, with big blue eyes and two long flaxen pigtails always tied with big, perky, blue-ribbon bows."

"Did *you* have flaxen hair, Grandma, when you were a schoolgirl?" asked Jeannette much astonished.

"Yes, indeed, Jet. My hair was very light until I had typhoid fever when Aunt Elsie was a baby, and had to have it shaved. Then it came out much darker," replied Grandma, whose hair was nearly the color of Jeannette's.

"Although I knew her name, I hadn't the slightest idea where my little girl lived," continued Grandfather, "until one afternoon, after school, there was a fire in the neighborhood and I went galloping around the corner and down Becker Street, which was just one block from Center Avenue where I lived, and you can imagine my surprise to see Elizabeth, in her blue dress and bows, standing on one of the front stoops watching the fire-engines go by. I was so astonished to find that she lived so near me, that I stopped short and stared at her, and then blurted out, 'So this is where you live.' "

"And *what* do you suppose was the very first thing he asked me?" questioned Grandma, laughing at the recollection.

"What?" demanded the children breathlessly.

"He said, 'Is your father a Republican or a Democrat?' "

"Oh, Grandpa, how funny!"

"After that," went on Grandfather Carr, "I always went to school the longest way round, so as to pass Elizabeth's house, although she lived a block farther away from the school than I did; and I used to spend many an hour climbing over her father's high back fence, and hooking apples, cherries, and peaches from their fruit-trees in hopes I would see 'my tow-headed girl,' as I called her, playing in the garden."

"And when he did," added Grandma with relish, "he used to do all kinds of foolish tricks, 'showing off' so that I would look at him."

"Mandy had been cook for Mrs. Little—Elizabeth's mother, and your great-grandmother, children—for a year or so then, and, though only a very young girl, she was just as fat as she is now, and I used to be deathly afraid of her when she swept out of the back door and threatened to give me 'one powahful lickin'' with her big shoe if I didn't quit climbing 'her' back fence,—although Mr. and Mrs. Little didn't object at all. Mandy's mother had been a slave, and Mandy had fourteen 'first' names; and

she told Mrs. Little, when she was engaged as cook, that her name was 'Pinkie-Rosie Amanda Virginia Magdalene Mary Martha Petunia Caroline Lillian Marguerite Veronica Rebecca Camilla—Jones,' but she always was called 'Pinkie-Rosie.' Mrs. Little stood aghast before the flood of names, and as her sense of humor would never permit her to call a two-hundred-pound darky 'Pinkie-Rosie,' she chose 'Amanda,' which came next in line, and 'Mandy' she has always remained.

"Mandy always wore a bright bandanna handkerchief around her head like a turban, as you know she does to this day, and, in addition, gold beads about her throat, and huge hoop ear-rings that showed off beautifully against her dark skin. She certainly was a fearful and wonderful sight when she waddled out in the yard with a broom in her hand."

"A more faithful servant never lived," laughed Grandmother, "but she certainly was feared by most of the neighborhood boys, for that broom was a formidable weapon, and she could use it with a will."

"Indeed, she could," agreed Grandfather vigorously. "I was eleven and Elizabeth was eight when I first knew her," he resumed.

"Just about my age," volunteered Wiggles. "Did you feel in your bones that some day he was going to be your husband, Grandma?"

"Of course not, child. But I always admired his curly hair and rosy cheeks."

"Now Elizabeth had a very odd elderly great-aunt named Mary, who used to visit the Littles every spring," continued Grandpa with much enjoyment. "Out in the big back yard was a wash-house, a small low shed where Mandy did the laundry work; and about the shed Elizabeth had a very pretty bed of posies that she tended herself. She was very proud of those posies, and had the garden outlined with white clam-shells, so it was most attractive, though I suppose it would look very queer to you children of to-day. Aunt Mary had the oddest notions about flowers, and always declared that they should be watered with boiling-hot water to make them grow quickly; and, of course, the hot water she insisted on putting on them killed

Elizabeth's blossoms every spring and made her most indignant. So after I knew Elizabeth, she and I used to trot busily up and down the ladder leading to the flat roof of the wash-house, carrying all her flowers up there in pots, every time that Aunt Mary was due to make a visit. We knew she would never dare climb up that rickety ladder to get at them. Then Elizabeth and her sister Louise, who is now Billy and Dick's grandmother, would take their china-doll babies there, too, and pull the ladder up after them, while Aunt Mary called, 'Come down, little dears, and bring your flowers for me to see,' from below."

"We simply *lived* on that shed-roof while Aunt Mary was at the house," put in Grandmother. "It made an ideal play-house, for it was cool and shady, as it was surrounded with all kinds of fruit-trees. Many a picnic lunch we enjoyed up there with our china dolls."

"Do you remember the time you had the whooping-cough?" chuckled Grandfather.

"Oh, tell us," pleaded the small granddaughters expectantly.

"Elizabeth and Lou, as we called Louise, had whooping-cough at the same time, as they were so near of an age that they were inseparable, like you and Jet," explained Grandpa, pinching Wiggles cheek. "One day before the 'whoops' had developed, and no one knew that the girls had it, although they were not feeling well, Aunt Mary, unknown to their mother, gave them each an enormous slice of blackberry pie. In about half an hour they were the sickest little girls you would want to see.

" 'Them chilluns has black diphtheria and is gwine ter die,' Mandy moaned, waddling around wringing her hands, for the youngsters were a terrible sight, with black juice dripping down their clothes and big dark rings around their mouths.

" 'Run for a doctor, Mandy,' said Mrs. Little, terribly frightened by the unexplained black mouths.

" 'No, no, it's not black 'theria,' Elizabeth gasped suddenly, letting out a regular war-whoop that she had been trying to repress. 'It's black—blackberry pie instead!' "

"Why *Grandma,* I think you must have been just as awful a child as I am, maybe awfuller," said Wiggles delightedly.

"Oh, I wasn't the only one that got in mischief," rejoined Grandma briskly. "Why don't you tell about some of your *own* escapades, David? Your experience in the wash-house, for instance."

"I hate to have my granddaughters realize what a bad boy I used to be," explained Grandpa solemnly, tweaking Wiggles' curls.

"We'll promise to overlook it, honestly," she replied mischievously. "Come, 'fess up."

"Well, it was one morning during summer vacation, when this happened. Elizabeth and Lou were busily playing dolls up on the shed-roof, and Mandy was washing inside, when I quietly shinned up the ladder. I had every intention of being good,—and Elizabeth was the one that first put the mischievous idea in my mind," went on Grandpa.

"Oh, I never, David," protested Grandmother. "You suggested it your own self."

"No, *ma'am,*" Grandpa stoutly denied.

"You said, 'I wish we had a little tub up here so that we could wash our dolls' clothes, for it would be such a fine place to dry them here in the sun'; and then you looked at me from under your lashes, and Lou kind of gave a little snicker, as much as to say, 'Bet you don't dare.'

"Mandy had just gone into the kitchen for some extra clothes-pins, and I had a sudden inspiration. There was a small-sized wash-tub in the shed, as I knew. It was just the right size for dolls' duds, I thought, but I was too lazy to carry that heavy thing up the tipsy ladder. I thought how much easier it would be if I could pull it up some way with ropes, and how astonished the girls would be at my cleverness."

"Showing off, you see," smiled Grandma.

"Yes, I guess I was," admitted Grandpa with a twinkle in his eye.

"So while Mandy was out of the way, I sneaked down and filled the little tub with suds from her big wash-tub, took down her good clothes-line and put through the handles, then brought the ends of the line up on the roof with a big hook, and, clambering back on the roof,

pulled briskly away. I felt pretty pleased with myself as the tub left the ground and rose higher and higher. Mandy, hearing our excited voices and giggles, became suspicious that there was mischief afoot, and rolled out in the yard just in time to see the tub dangling above her head. She let out a roar of wrath that made me quake. I declare I didn't tip it over purposely, but some way, in my haste, the ropes pulled unevenly, and that whole tub of soapy water turned upside down in mid-air and showered down on her red-bandanna turban and calico dress, until she was drenched.

"'You good-fer-nothin' limb o' Satan,' she yelled, giving a yank to her clothes-line, and, before I knew what was happening, clothes-line, tub, and I went down in a heap together, landing on the ground at her feet.

"I didn't have a chance to escape," laughed Grandpa, "for in a second she had me by my collar and carried me into that shed like a baby, and soused me up and down in the big wash-tub till I yelled for mercy. But the funniest part of it was, that after that punishment she was my

firm friend forever, and would call me into her kitchen and feed me cookies and doughnuts every time I came over. And, as you know, Mandy surely can cook."

"What did your mother say when you went home all wet and soapy?" giggled Jeannette, much entertained.

"That was the saddest part of all," chuckled Grandpa, "for, in spite of my forlorn appearance, she didn't seem to think I had been punished nearly enough, and gave me a good hard trouncing that I remembered for many a long day. And for a long, long time after that, I was very wary of Mandy, remembering her strong right arm."

"I must ask Mandy to wear the beads and earrings some time," said Wiggles, "for I would love to see how they would look with her turban."

"And this piece of necktie in the story-quilt was from the one you had on when you first met Grandma, wasn't it? Did she cut it off right then?"

"Oh, goodness, no, Jeannette. But it was very fashionable for all the little girls in those days, and the bigger ones, too, to ask the boys and young men they knew to save the ends of their neckties for making into quilts. Quilt-making was as popular then as embroidery is to-day, and on some of the big pieces of silk and satin you can see the sprays of flowers that have been embroidered. See, here's a wreath of apple-blossoms on this pale-blue satin square, and water-lilies on this light green triangle. The silks are going in ribbons, and it's really the embroideries that are holding them together."

"I must ask Lou to show you her quilt some day when we are over to see Billy and Dick," added Grandma. "Her quilt is much handsomer than mine, as it is made entirely from big squares of satin or silk, and every piece is worked with a floral spray. She has golden-rod on the yellow square, black-eyed susan on the orange, forget-me-nots on the blue, and roses on the pink. I remember it was exhibited when she finished it, and won a prize, of which she

was very proud. I shouldn't be surprised if embroidered-silk patchwork came into style again sometime."

"Tell us,—" began Wiggles, but Grandfather Carr hastily arose.

"Now, no more tales of my misdeeds," he firmly declared, "for if I tell you any more of my naughty doings, you won't have any respect left for my few remaining gray hairs. Besides, I am sure I hear Marion and Alice downstairs, and, without doubt, they want to see how you invalids are coming along."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE ENCHANTED PALACE WAKES

ANY one would have thought, to hear the rapturous greetings, that the friends had been separated for months instead of days, for they chattered like magpies, as each one tried to tell everything that had happened since they had last been together.

"Miss Helen showed us the May-baskets at assembly this morning, and told us all about your adventure. What a dreadful time you had. Weren't you terribly frightened? I know I would have been scared to death, for it was the worst storm I ever heard," said Marion, settling down comfortably on the foot of the big bed and examining the story-quilt with interest. "The whole school is so interested, and no one talks about anything else but that and the May Frolic. Did you know that two miles down the road there was a regular baby cyclone, and a whole orchard was pulled up by the roots?

The trees look as if a giant had flung them about, and it's too bad, for they are covered with buds."

"One farmhouse has fourteen panes of glass broken, and there's not a flag-pole anywhere near that hasn't been struck," put in Alice eagerly, smoothing her blue gingham dress so that Boots could curl down in her lap for a doze. "The flag-pole at school is all in splinters, and I brought you a big piece as a souvenir of the storm. Gabriel climbed up the pole at recess and got a big piece that no one else could reach. He said he hoped you'd be at school soon, and if you wanted any more pieces of the flag-pole, just to let him know."

"Well, it was very nice of Gabriel, but I really think this piece is enough," said Wiggles hastily, viewing very doubtfully the huge chunk of wood that Alice produced, and privately wondering where she could keep it.

"I told him that if he sent any more, he might as well send you the whole flag-pole and be done with it," giggled Marion.

"Gabriel is the boy that sits back of you at school, isn't he, Woggsie?" asked Mrs. Eaton,

much amused at the souvenir. "I remember meeting him down-town one day, and he gave you the turtle that you have in your aquarium."

"Yes, he's a nice boy, but just crazy over all kinds of squirmy things," replied Jeannette with a look of distaste. "He brings the most wonderful wild flowers and rare mosses to school and knows just where they all grow. He knows all about mushrooms, too, and is fascinated by everything he sees in the woods or fields. I never saw such a boy. But he will carry around such *queer* things in his pockets."

"Why, he knows the greatest lot about all kinds of strange things that the teacher calls 'wood-lore,'" continued Alice, patting Boots, who purred like a teakettle. "He can tell you all about butterflies, and birds, and ants. And I never saw such lovely odd flowers as he finds in the woods. Oh, that reminds me. Did you know that the old coffee-mill in the clearing was struck by lightning, too, and burned right down to the ground?"

Jet and Wiggles looked at each other with startled eyes. To think the coffee-mill, that had

been their refuge, was gone. What if it had been struck while they were in it?

Mrs. Eaton shivered, and, to change the subject, for she saw how white the children grew when they heard this news, the basket-patterns were produced, and the lovely crêpe and tissue papers were exhibited to the interested girls.

Then Grandmother Carr brought scissors and paste, and, wrapping the invalids carefully in their bathrobes, she fixed them comfortably at the big sewing-table by the window, where all four friends tried their skill at making May-baskets.

"Gabriel says he is going to vote for Wiggles for Queen, and I am, too," confided Alice, as she pasted pink petals to a basket she was making into a huge rosy chrysanthemum.

"Oh, Jet would be a much better Queen than I," exclaimed Wiggles earnestly, smearing paste all over her hands in her excitement. "Why, I couldn't be 'haunty' no matter how hard I tried." She meant "haughty." "Queens have to be just as proper as proper, and I never could be in the world."

"The Queen in 'Alice in Wonderland' wasn't proper," protested Jet, cutting out daisy petals. "Don't you remember how she yelled, 'Off with their heads!' all the while? What *are* you making, Marion?"

Marion giggled as she held up her basket, shaped like a head of lettuce, to which she was just adding the last crinkly leaves.

"It's a joke on Hugh," she explained calmly, as she twisted the pale green leaves into shape. "Grandfather gave me the idea, so I thought I'd make the basket while I was here. I'm going to fill this head of lettuce with vegetables and hang it as a May-basket for him, with a funny rhyme, 'cause he was a mean thing and wouldn't show me the basket I found out he was making for Jeannette. He'd be furious if he knew I told you, and he'll be mad as hops when he sees this, 'cause he loves to call me 'Carrots,' "—with a toss of her tawny mane—"but says his own hair is auburn." She accented the last word with such a disdainful sniff that the other girls giggled.

"What is the rhyme?" asked Alice.

"I'm going to put a bunch of radishes, a turnip, and some beets inside, and this rhyme:

"'Although your nose is turnip,
And your hair a radish Hugh (reddish hue),
Still lettuce send this token,
As our heart still beets for you.'"

"Won't he be mad?" chuckled Polly Wiggles, "'specially about that 'reddish hue.'"

"Grandfather helped me write it last night, and said it would be a good way to tease him back for all the jokes he makes about me. I could hardly wait until to-day to make the basket. This shade of green is just right for the lettuce, and doesn't it look natural? If you'll give me a hat-pin, I'll help curl your chrysanthemum petals for you, Alice."

"Here's one on Grandma's bureau," said Wiggles. "What do you do with it?"

"You want to put each petal on the table and rub the head of the pin real hard against it. It gives it a crinkly look and curls the petal. I learned how when the Ladies' Aid had a big tea, for they decorated with hundreds of yellow

chrysanthemums, and I helped make them. The room looked beautiful."

"I should think it would have been lovely. It's a splendid idea, Marion," enthused Jeannette, who found it worked beautifully with her second basket, a big red rose. "Don't you like this daisy basket Wiggles and I just finished for Mother? I was so glad that she went downstairs, for it gave us a chance to make it. We're going to make a lilac basket for Grandma next."

"It certainly is pretty," returned Alice, examining the dainty yellow-and-white basket with pleasure. "It was a good idea, making the basket itself a deep yellow, and then adding the big white petals. Won't it be fun, on May morning, to scurry around and hang them on the door-knobs? Of course it won't really be May Day, but the day of the frolic instead. I think it's lots more exciting than Valentine's day, and I do hope we'll do it every year. Who do you suppose will be May Queen?"

"I think one of the older girls will get the most votes, don't you?" asked Jeannette.

"You never can tell," said Marion wisely.

"Jane Juggins is positive that she will be chosen, and gives herself as many airs and graces as if she had been crowned already. She makes me sick. She said this noon that she was the only real blonde in school, and that therefore she'd look best as Queen, and that she was going to have a real satin and chiffon dress with a *train* if she was selected."

"Well, I hope to goodness sake she won't be," broke in Alice decidedly. "Of course she is older, and mighty sure of herself, but I don't think she's so very popular."

"Dear me," said Wiggles, rumpling her curls, "won't it be thrilling to have the names of King and Queen read out before the whole school, and then see them go up to the platform and select their attendants? I can just imagine how shivery and excited they will feel, can't you?"

"I don't care who is Queen, as long as Jane Juggins isn't," sniffed Marion. "She called after me this morning, 'Well, Red-Head, you won't have to worry about being Queen or Maid of Honor. Your hair's so fiery it would set fire to the Maypole!' "

"The horrid creature!" snorted Wiggles wrathfully, "when every one thinks your hair is stunning, and lots prettier than that molasses-taffy color of hers. I wish I'd been there."

Alice dropped her chrysanthemum and scissors, and opened her black-fringed blue eyes wide at the interesting news she was about to impart.

"What *do* you s'pose?" she demanded breathlessly. "I have some news, and I almost forgot to tell you." She paused impressively, with a true sense of the dramatic, and looked from one interested face to another.

"Yes, yes; go on," they chorused eagerly.

"Well, White Birches has been opened, and the people are going to live there every summer. Their name is MacAllister and they have one son, and— Oh, my goodness, girls," with a squeal of excitement, "there he is now!"

Four eager faces leaned toward the windows as a handsome dark-eyed boy on a beautiful white pony, followed by a big white collie dog, dashed up the driveway of White Birches.

"Oh, oh, *oh,* that lovely pony," sighed Wig-

gles rapturously. "Did you ever see such a darling in all your life? Isn't it a picture under that arch of birch-trees, with that snowy dog capering along behind? Just look!"

May-baskets were forgotten as they watched the graceful lad race up and down the paths, followed by the excited dog.

"Maybe," said Wiggles hopefully, with visions of riding on that entrancing pony in her mind,—"maybe he has a sister, about your age."

"Well, maybe he hasn't," returned Alice disconsolately, " 'cause Mother said that there was *one* child, a son. Isn't it a shame? They just came yesterday, and have lived abroad for several years."

"If *only* he had been a girl," sighed Wiggles sadly. "What good times we all could have had together. We could have played dolls in those dear little rustic summer-houses——"

"And gone boating on Willow Lake," put in Jeannette glumly.

"And ridden on that darling pony," added Alice. "But boys are so—so——"

"Not 'xactly disgustable, but—well, unin-

teresting," bemoaned Polly Wiggles with a toss of her black mop of curls. "Wouldn't it have been gorgeous if he had been a twin?"

"I should say it would," agreed Jet, looking very downhearted.

"With a beautiful dark-eyed sister named Jacqueline," continued Wiggles dreamily. "You know we *always* thought the 'Enchanted Palace,' as we called it, would belong to a dark-eyed Prince Charming, who would appear on a snow-white charger, and quaff three times from the water of Willow Lake, and the Palace would wake to life."

"Well, there's your dark-eyed Prince on his white charger. What more do you want?" demanded Alice calmly, motioning toward the lad on the white pony. "Goodness, you can't complain when your fancies come true like that. I think it's perfectly thrilling that your Prince appeared just as you pretended."

"Don't say 'my Prince,' as if he belonged to me. You all pretended about him, too. And he's not a Prince anyway, he's only an everyday boy," sniffed Wiggles.

"Not exactly an *everyday* boy," disagreed Marion. "He's not an everyday boy like my brother, Hugh, for instance,—any boy that owns a snow-white dog and pony, and has been abroad, and lives in such a gorgeous place!"

"And he certainly is dark-eyed, and he's riding a white charger," volunteered Jeannette, wide-eyed at the coincidence.

"That's not a charger,—it's a rather fat white pony," Wiggles corrected, gazing critically at the good-looking lad. "Yes-s, I admit his eyes *are* dark, I can see that from here. But he hasn't taken a drink from Willow Lake, and he isn't a really grown-up Prince——"

"Give him time, give him time," murmured Alice absently. "Remember that a Prince can always grow up,—but he can't grow down; and he's older than we are, anyway. Oh, will you look!"

There was no need to ask them to look. Four pairs of eyes stared unwinkingly, for, as if Wiggles' remark had been a signal, the boy, unconscious of the interest he was causing, had jumped from his pony and sauntered down to the edge

of the lake. He was warm from his trot about the grounds, that was certain, for he shook back his thick chestnut-colored hair, and fanned himself vigorously with his handkerchief. Then, as the girls stood rigid with excitement, he stooped to the edge of the water, and, cupping his hands together, drank three times from Willow Lake.

As if indeed the dreamy spell that had hung over the place so long had been broken, a big limousine, driven by a colored chauffeur, rolled up the driveway, and the front door of the house opened to disclose a pleasant-faced lady, who hastened down the steps, and then paused to speak to a groom, who appeared to lead away the white pony.

"I'm ready, Donald," she called, and the boy hurried toward her, gallantly assisting her into the car, and then bundling himself and the big collie in as well.

"His name is Donald MacAllister. Isn't that an attractive name?" asked Alice approvingly, as the car disappeared down the road.

"He looks as if he were nice and full of fun,"

added Marion, "but wasn't it odd that the whole place *did* come to life just as he drank from Willow Lake? I felt just as if I were looking at a play."

"Every single thing turned out just as we pretended, except the sister," declared Jeannette in an awed voice, "and we can't expect everything. It's just like a fairy-tale come true."

"Well, I know one thing I can expect if I don't skip for home," laughed Marion with a glance at the clock. "Seems as if that clock must be telling fibs, but I don't suppose it is. The afternoon has just flown, and it's six o'clock already, and I'll get a scolding if I don't practise an hour."

"Do tell us all about the Enchanted Palace," pleaded Alice, gathering together her materials. "Maybe there is a fairy godmother to appear yet. And, talking about appearances, here comes——"

"Gruel," put in Grandfather Carr mischievously, as he appeared with a dainty tray for two.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AN OLD FRIENDSHIP RENEWED

"WATCH me turn a cart-wheel," shrieked Wiggles, flashing down the veranda steps and turning cart-wheels so rapidly down the path to where the three other girls were waiting for her by the gate, that it made them dizzy to look at her.

"There," she puffed triumphantly, coming up rosy and breathless and shaking back a mop of tumbled black curls, "I feel better now that I've let off steam. That's to prove that I'm not an invalid any more. Won't it seem nice to be back at school again, Jet?"

"Look how you've tumbled your clean dress," reproved Jeannette, looking her sister over critically. "Mother wouldn't like you to act like that, anyway,—it isn't ladylike." Jeannette was

fond on occasions of adopting an elder-sister tone.

"Well, who wants to be a lady?" returned Wiggles, tossing her curls and casting a quick glance at her crisp linen frock. "I don't, I'm sure. When I get so old that I can't jump around or climb fences or wade in brooks or do anything that's fun at all, then I'll have lots and lots of time left over in which to be ladylike; and, oh, won't I hate it!"

On the green lawn opposite, the handsome lad astride the white pony had sat up with interest and an alert look in his dark eyes, as the mischievous Wiggles went whirling down the path.

"That's some girl," he told the white pony, and his eyes rested with approval on the glistening black curls of the small maiden who was waiting impatiently while her hair-ribbon was more securely anchored, and Jeannette straightened the belt of her dress.

"I *never* saw a girl in France or Spain or Japan or England or any other place turn cartwheels like that," Donald MacAllister confided

to the pony, who tossed its head impatiently at being held in check. "American girls beat them all, that's sure. You know, I'd like to know that girl, and those boys that I saw over there yesterday. It's awfully lonesome not knowing any one around, isn't it, Snow Queen? Come on, let's do some tricks."

Over the stone wall went the pony, guided by Donald's capable hands, and the four children opposite watched with interest as the sturdy boy put the pretty animal through all kinds of tricks. Finally he jumped erect, and balancing himself on Snow Queen's back as she trotted along, he carelessly reached up and plucked a spray of leaves from the branches overhead.

"Oh, oh, look at that!" breathed three of the girls in admiration, watching the good-looking lad with round-eyed amazement.

"Pooh—showing off," said Wiggles coolly, tossing her curls and glancing from the corner of her eyes as Donald easily lowered himself into the saddle and jumped back over the stone wall again. "Thought you were all in such a dread-

ful hurry. I'll race you to the brook." And in a second all four girls were off, leaving the boy looking after them with wistful eyes.

"What's the matter, Donald?" asked a laughing voice behind him, and he turned with a smile to greet the slim brown-haired lady who was strolling over the lawn toward him.

"Just wishing I knew some of the boys and girls around here," he replied, dismounting as he spoke, and tucking his arm through his mother's with a lordly air that was most amusing.

"Well, Don, I'm sure you'll soon get acquainted. It's been many, many years since I was last in Meadowbrook," she continued with a slight sigh, "but I am sure that some of my old friends must still live around here, and I know that you'll enjoy having a real home and playmates at last."

"Yesterday I saw some bully-looking boys, and this morning a girl that turned cart-wheels like lightning, over there," Donald responded with animation, motioning toward The Lilacs. "Do you know who lives there?"

"Not any more. When I was a girl—" be-

gan Mrs. MacAllister, only to break off and look with startled eyes at the figure that appeared on the lawn opposite. "Can I believe my own eyes?" she gasped, as Mrs. Carr, carrying scissors and a large basket, and intent on gathering bouquets for the house, came into view, with Boots following at her heels.

"I do believe that The Lilacs has never been sold, and that our old friends, the Carrs, are still living there. How I hope so! It will make my home-coming very happy if Jean and Elsie still live opposite. I heard that Jean married a doctor."

With a graceful gesture very much like her son's, she caught interested Donald by the hand and hastened across the road to where Grandmother Carr was busily snipping lilac blossoms.

"Marie Deering!" cried Mrs. Carr, dropping lilacs, basket and all, and seizing Mrs. MacAllister's outstretched hands. "Can it be you who have come back to White Birches after all these years?"

"Indeed, it is, dear Mrs. Carr," returned Donald's mother, smiling, "only I'm Marie

MacAllister now, and this is my son, Donald."

She pulled forward the brown-eyed boy as she spoke, who bowed with an easy grace most engaging, and then stooped to recover the basket and tumbled lilac-sprays.

"You see," Mrs. MacAllister continued eagerly, "I've always wanted really to settle down in my childhood home, so White Birches has become my own again, and I only hope that I am in America to stay."

"Then you have been living abroad?" questioned Mrs. Carr, smiling at Donald, who returned the smile with interest.

"Yes. White Birches was sold right after my parents died so suddenly," explained Mrs. MacAllister. "Two years later I met Douglas MacAllister, and married him, and ever since we have roamed over the world, so that my poor Donald has lived in his own land less than in any other. For the past two years we have been in England, and at last I am happy to say that my husband's business has brought him back to our own country, and here we intend to remain."

"We heard that an English widow had bought

White Birches," said Grandmother Carr, looking much relieved.

Mrs. MacAllister gave a low laugh. "That's the way gossip confused things," she responded gayly. "Mr. MacAllister will not be here for another six weeks, and we are still spending most of our time between Meadowbrook and New York, for the place was badly in need of repairs before we could move in, but another few days will find us entirely settled, and then I want you surely to come over and bring Elsie and Jean and your little granddaughters, so that my boy may become acquainted. How I shall enjoy renewing my friendship with Jean. My poor boy has never lived long enough in one land to know what a real chum is like, and now I hope to give him all he has missed in these years of travel."

"Then it is your beautiful white pony that the children have been talking about," Mrs. Carr said with a smile at Donald, who gave her a merry glance.

"Yes, that is Snow Queen," he replied, "and I have another just like her, called 'White Beauty.'

I'd love to have the girls ride on them any time they would like. They are very gentle," he continued hastily, "and wouldn't hurt them at all."

"I know that they would be more than pleased," replied Grandmother Carr, "and it is very kind of you, for both children are fond of riding."

"Is the little girl with black curls your granddaughter?" asked Donald with interest.

"Yes, that's Wiggles,—I should say Elizabeth," laughed Mrs. Carr, "but 'Wiggles' so expresses her love of perpetual motion that she is called it most of the time."

"I noticed her this morning," returned Mrs. MacAllister, "and thought what a captivating little mischief she was. To think that she is Jean's daughter!"

"Jeannette is Wiggles' older sister, and the two other girls are their inseparable companions, Marion West and Alice Maxfield," added Mrs. Carr. "I don't believe you have seen Cubby as yet. She is the baby of the family, and her real name is Evelyn."

"And the boys that I saw yesterday afternoon, who were they?" put in Donald eagerly.

"They are Jeannette's and Elizabeth's cousins, Billy and Dick Gerard, and are fine manly boys, just bubbling over with mischief. The boy with dark-red hair is Marion's brother, Hugh West. I'm sure you will like them all, and have many good times together after you become acquainted."

"Couldn't you and Jean and Elsie bring the little girls over to see us some afternoon next week?" asked Mrs. MacAllister. "Any day that suits you will be convenient for me."

"Please do," begged Donald.

"We should love to," responded Grandmother Carr, smiling into the pleading dark eyes that begged her to say "yes," so beseechingly. "I can't promise which day it will be, but if it is satisfactory to you, we will just run in informally."

"Any day you like. I so anticipate seeing you all again and having an old time powwow. We have many years to make up, you know," laughed Mrs. MacAllister. "Come, Don. If

we are going into town to see the decorators, we shall have to hurry. Good-by, Mrs. Carr. Please remember me to Jean and Elsie, and don't forget your promise to run in."

"And bring Dick and Billy, too, if they can come," called back Donald.

Mrs. Carr returned to her flower-gathering in a contented frame of mind.

Marie Deering and Jean Carr had been intimate friends in their childhood days, long before Jean had married Dr. Eaton, or Marie had become Mrs. MacAllister, and she knew how pleasant the revival of friendship would be to them all; while gallant, sturdy Donald had greatly appealed to her, and would be a pleasant companion for the children. She could easily imagine the many good times they would have together; and, picking up her basket of blossoms in one hand, and Boots in the other, she hurried into the house to tell the good news.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GABRIEL'S SURPRISE

JEANNETTE'S and Elizabeth's arrival at school was a regular triumphant entry. They were quite the heroines of the hour after the experience they had been through, and the pupils were all agog to hear their own account of the adventure. Older pupils, who had never before noticed their existence, stopped to inquire all about the dreadful storm, and offered them fruit and candy.

Naturally the news had spread like wild-fire all through the small school. In addition the class-rooms buzzed with May Day plans, and even although the boys had pooh-poohed the idea, they were not above showing off in anticipation of votes.

It was surprising how rapidly the basket-frames had disappeared. There could be no doubt but that the May Frolic would be a suc-

cess, for the children were wildly enthusiastic.

Slips of paper and pencils were given out at assembly, and each pupil cast two votes, one for King and one for Queen. Excitement ran high when, to the stirring march played on the piano, the classes one by one filed past the big desk where Miss Helen sat, and dropped pale-pink slips containing the chosen Queen's name into one big box, and blue slips on which were written the King's name into another. The votes were to be counted during the day, and the names of the King and Queen of the May would be announced at closing time. It was hard to return to the class-rooms and settle down to work.

"Say, Wiggles," whispered Gabriel from the seat behind hers, "I'll let you see all my spelling if you don't know yours, and I have something to give you at recess,—a surprise for you."

As Gabriel's spelling was the worst in the room, Wiggles did not accept his offer, but she beamed at the idea of a surprise, and during the lessons kept wondering what it could be.

She was nearly overcome with curiosity all through the morning, for Gabriel's black head

kept disappearing in his desk, where the surprise had been carefully stowed away, in a most tantalizing manner.

To Gabriel's idea of thinking, no girl in the school could compare with Elizabeth. He declared that any girl who could skip rope, and run, and walk fences as she did, with the agility of an acrobat, was almost as good as a boy; and on his prowls through fields and woods he was always collecting rare ferns for her garden, or the first fragrant sprays of arbutus, or fragile Indian-pipes, and bringing them to school for her, just to see her blue eyes open with amazement, and to hear her say, "Oh, isn't that lovely! Where did you ever find it?"

He swelled with importance as he thought how she would clap her hands and spin round on her toes when she beheld the surprise in store for her at recess, as he had never before found anything so unusual.

As Gabriel was always bringing surprises, and delightful ones, too, Polly Wiggles wondered with a little wriggle of impatience if it could be the clump of maiden-hair fern which she had

long wanted for her rockery. Only the week before he had given her a little birch-bark box, beautifully made, and heaped with the first wild strawberries, scarlet and tempting, and each one big as her thumb and sweet as honey.

But if Wiggles had known what was to greet her eyes at recess, she never would have sat so quietly, or listened so intently to the teacher's words.

Arithmetic and reading went on as usual, and then paper was distributed for painting, which was always the first period after recess. Wiggles loathed painting, and it always mortified her to see her own finished daubs.

Alice was very artistic, and did splendid work in both drawing and color work, so she examined with interest the object to be copied, a pretty yellow teapot placed on a small table at the front of the room, where it was in a good position for all the youthful artists to see.

Alice was monitor of the paint-boxes, and went about importantly placing a box and brush at each desk, and tiny glasses of water in which to wash the brushes.

At last arithmetic came to an end, and the bell rang for recess, which was a twenty-minute period of relaxation for the children, during which they might walk about the class-room and talk, or play out-of-doors in the big school-yard.

It was such a beautiful day that most of the children bolted for the school-yard, Alice among the first, expecting Wiggles to follow, and join in a game of Poison Tag, or Illario.

But Wiggles waited with a beating heart to see the surprise.

"I'm so anxious to see it," she smiled, spinning round in her seat and wondering if Gabriel could be making her a May-basket. She knew that Dick was weaving two, one for Marion, and one for Alice, and that Hugh had already made one for Jeannette, so she was anxious to see if any of her friends remembered her as well.

"I got it for you yesterday," Gabriel beamed, plunging into his desk and rummaging about for a tantalizing time. "Look here—isn't it a dandy?"

Now Gabriel had no intention of frightening Wiggles. He was an enthusiastic naturalist,

and loved all the small creatures that inhabited the woods and fields. Wiggles had exclaimed with pleasure over a tiny turtle that he had given her, and the thought never entered his mind that, like other small girls, she might be afraid of his unusual surprise. So with a comical air of triumph he held out to her,—not a dainty May-basket, as she half expected, but a wiggling, slimy snake.

His big black eyes danced with pleasure as he coiled the creature in his hands, to place on Polly Wiggles' lap.

With an exclamation of fright and disgust, Wiggles sprang away, and only with difficulty repressed a shriek, for if there was one thing she detested above all others, it was any kind of a snake. Her white and horrified face told Gabriel even more than her faltering tongue.

"Oh! oh! oh! Keep it away from me. Don't let it get *on* me!" she chattered, shivering at the idea.

Gabriel's face fell.

"I'm sorry, Wiggles," he mourned, hastily

stuffing the snake into his desk like a wad of string. "I wouldn't have scared you for anything, but aren't girls queer to be afraid of a little snake like this? It won't hurt you. Why, Wiggles, it's most unusual, it's a——"

"Oh, I don't care if it's worth a million dollars," shuddered Wiggles. "It makes me feel creepy just to think of it. How *can* you handle it?"

"But you handled a turtle," exclaimed puzzled Gabriel, much surprised at the distinction shown. "I meant to give it to you for keeps, in a May-basket at first, on May Day, 'cause I thought you'd be kind o' pleased."

"I'm sorry, too, Gabriel," apologized Polly Wiggles, seeing his disappointment, and trying to keep back a shudder. "I honestly did like your little turtle ever so much. That was cunning. But *please* don't hang any snakes, or-or—spiders, or *crawly* things in a May-basket for me, will you? I like flowers and ferns so much better. Let's—let's go out now, and play tag."

To tell the truth, Polly Wiggles was decidedly

anxious to get as far away from the snake as possible.

"Don't tell teacher," warned Gabriel, banging down his desk-lid. "She might not like it, either, though I can't see why she should mind my having a nice little snake in my desk."

Still he knew from past experiences that teachers had most peculiar ideas about what should and should not be brought to school in a boy's pockets.

"Are you certain-sure that your desk is tight, so it can't get out?" asked Wiggles nervously, seeing in imagination the slimy, slippery snake crawling over the back of the desk, and down into her own seat.

"Course it's tight," Gabriel replied in disgust. "Didn't you hear how I banged down the lid? You don't suppose I want that valuable snake walking all over the school, do you?"

"Mercy, I should hope not," shuddered Polly Wiggles in horror.

Now Gabriel honestly believed the desk was tight, and that the prisoner was safe inside, but

in some way the banging had been too hard, and the lid had sprung back a tiny crack, leaving plenty of room for a small wriggling snake to crawl through.

Never had the school-yard looked so attractive to Polly Wiggles. The idea of "telling teacher" never entered her mind. If Gabriel had brought the "surprise" to school with the idea of being unkind and frightening her, it would have been different; but she knew that his intentions had been good, and she had been brought up to scorn tattling.

Recess passed all too quickly. Unfortunately she had a too-active imagination, which made her feel its slippery length coiling around her neck, and it was with lagging feet that she left the pleasant school-yard, and took her seat for the painting lesson. She felt crawly all over. So it was with thankful heart that she heard Miss Mason tell her to move her painting things over to the end aisle where the light was better.

Gabriel, with all memory of the snake erased from his mind, had been sent on an errand into

the sixth grade, which was the highest in the school, for all older pupils went to the grammar school in Morristown.

Polly Wiggles need not have worried, however, about sitting in her own seat, for the active little snake no longer rustled about in the dark desk behind her.

It did not take long to move paints and paper over to the other seat, and she heaved a sigh of relief as she at last settled her starched white skirts, and wet her paint-brush.

In back of her sat the artist of the school, Allan Harrison, who was already, with joyful heart, engaged in coloring his beautifully sketched teapot a vivid yellow.

Allan's work was really remarkable, and several of his other sketches held place of honor on the bulletin board at the front of the room.

Polly Wiggles glanced over her shoulder at his clever fingers, and then, with a sigh of despair, she hopelessly settled herself to the hated task.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HAIL TO THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE MAY!

POLLY WIGGLES' work went poorly. Her sketched work looked more like an overgrown orange than the teapot for which it was intended. The colors ran and blurred on the erased and re-erased work until it was a messy, blotchy sight. Over in the next aisle, Alice was lovingly adding finishing touches to her nearly completed drawing, and wishing with all her heart that painting periods might come far oftener, and that arithmetic periods could be skipped altogether.

Polly Wiggles craned her neck to look admiringly at the daintily-colored teapot, and wondered despairingly why her own work could never stay neat and tidy like Alice's.

She surveyed her paper in disgust. "It looks like a sunset on a foggy day," she mused, as she tried to smooth the trickling threads of color that

blurred out in smudgy rays from the squat body of the teapot. "No one would guess in a million years that it was s'posed to be a teapot. I really think it looks more 'teapotty' upside down than it does right-way-about. Guess I'll label it so that Miss Mason will know which way to look at it."

In a neat hand she wrote, "This is a teapot," and added her name beneath in black ink, which unfortunately, mingled with the still wet paint, and produced a most peculiar and unwished-for effect.

Allan leaned over her shoulder, to look with unflattering astonishment at the completed work of art.

"What *is* it?" he breathed curiously in Wiggles' ear, leaning closer for a better view.

Polly Wiggles stifled a giggle and pointed silently to the label underneath.

"I thought it was a crook-neck squash," added Allan with more honesty than politeness. "Hand it over, and I'll try to smooth it out for you."

With a grateful glance, Polly Wiggles cau-

tiously edged the sopping piece of paper over the back of her seat, and then, after thoroughly cleaning her brushes, settled down to study the next day's spelling lesson.

A few deft strokes from Allan's magic paint-brush did wonders to the "squash," but he did not dare add too many frills to a work not his own. Polly Wiggles accepted it back with joy, and resumed her spelling in a more contented frame of mind, while Allan restlessly looked about for new worlds to conquer.

He had finished his painting long before, but, lacking anything better to do, he aimlessly added a soft blurred background, and wrote "Allan Harrison" in a dashing hand below. On an extra sheet of paper he started sketching at random, until his alert blue eyes were attracted by the beautiful American flag that hung in the front of the room, and he hastily set to work to reproduce it with his brush and colors. The heavy cream-colored drawing-paper was most unsatisfactory, and refused to show the proper white stripes between the vivid red ones. Pad paper was even worse, as it was crossed with nar-

row blue lines, and the artist in him sighed for a sheet of plain white on which to work. Then suddenly his roving eyes were attracted by the expanse of stiff, dazzling-white linen that was the back of Polly Wiggles' linen frock. With fascinated gaze he watched it for a full minute, but with him, to think was to act, and, never pausing to consider after-consequences, he rubbed his brush briskly across the red paint, and, unhindered by the short black curls above, proceeded with an artist's delight to work on this novel easel.

Allan's deportment marks were usually among the best in the room. He was always absorbed during painting periods, so his work continued unchecked, for Miss Mason was busily correcting arithmetic papers, and he had the last seat in the aisle.

Polly Wiggles, absorbed in her speller, never even felt the deft touch on her back, and beneath his nimble, clever fingers the flag grew rapidly.

Alice put down her paint-brush reluctantly, and jumped to her feet to begin gathering to-

BENEATH HIS NIMBLE, CLEVER FINGERS THE FLAG GREW RAPIDLY. —*Page 214.*

gether the finished work from the front desks of each aisle, where papers were passed when completed, to be laid in neat piles for the monitor to collect. It was great fun being a monitor and having the privilege of tiptoeing from one end of the room to the other, and arranging the drawings on teacher's desk. Alice fluttered about like a busy bee, occasionally buzzing a whisper to some particular friend as she removed wet brushes and glasses of water.

Miss Mason looked up with a smile at rosy Alice, who was a great favorite of hers. "You may put the teapot on the closet-shelf," she said pleasantly as she accepted the pile of drawings, "and be careful, for it is a very fine piece of china, and I should hate to have it broken."

Alice grasped it as gingerly as if she expected it to explode any minute, but, in spite of all her care, it was the teapot's last appearance. As she lifted it carefully with both hands, a wicked little head with a swiftly darting tongue reared up from the spout, and with a startled shriek that could be heard through the entire school, the

pretty teapot crashed to the floor, and panic-stricken Alice fled to the back of the room, where she stood shivering with fright.

In a twinkling the class was in an uproar.

"A snake, a snake!" shrilled frightened girls, clambering on their seats and gazing with startled eyes at the small wriggling snake that was as frightened as they were.

"Some one of you boys catch it," ordered Miss Mason hastily. "Quick, Allan, head it off. This is some of Gabriel's doings."

The door into the corridor opened quietly, and Gabriel entered, his errand completed and nothing farther from his mind than the thought of his pet's escape. To tell the truth, he had entirely forgotten bringing the snake to school. He stood frozen a moment in the doorway at sight of the uproarious class-room. Then, as the meaning of the excitement dawned on his puzzled face, his eyes sought Polly Wiggles' blue ones in mute questioning.

Miss Mason surveyed him sternly. "What does this mean?" she questioned sharply, rap-

ping for quiet. "Shut that door quickly.—Look out, or it will be out in the hall."

Gabriel slammed the door, plunged hastily across the floor, and scrambled to secure his pet, while the class squealed in wild excitement.

"You may take that creature outside,—and leave it," Miss Mason ordered, wondering wearily what next the children would do. "Then dispose of this broken china, . . . and remain after dismissal to-night."

Gabriel stole quietly from the room with a very red face, to return shortly and pass ten uncomfortable minutes on his knees before the class as he gathered up in a dust-pan all that remained of the once lovely teapot. Evidently the snake had crawled inside and coiled down while the children were at recess, for the lid had been off when they returned, and Miss Mason had clapped it on, unconsciously making the snake a prisoner. And there he had quietly stayed until Alice had disturbed his resting-place.

Lessons could not be resumed for quite a

while, for it was hard to get the wildly excited pupils to come to order, and for snickerings and rustlings to calm down. Alice was still shaking from the shock, and worrying because she, the monitor of the paint-boxes, had broken the teapot. She felt much better after Miss Mason assured her that it was not her fault at all.

Gabriel unobtrusively returned with the empty dust-pan and slipped into his seat with downcast eyes, his very ears scarlet with mortification.

Every Friday afternoon was poetry afternoon, and four pupils were selected each week to learn any poem of not less than twelve lines to recite before the class. Poor Gabriel! It certainly was his unlucky day, for he despised "elocuting," as he called it, and, unfortunately, his turn came first.

Gabriel's choice in poetry was most peculiar. The time before he had recited a sentimental ballad, with what he considered appropriate gestures, so the pupils waited with breathless interest as he unwillingly rose from his seat. But they broke out afresh, and even Miss Mason

had to press a handkerchief to her lips, as he clasped his hands before him, raised his eyes toward the ceiling, and gloomily chanted with all the pathos he could put into his young voice, the hymn starting:

"Hark from the tombs a doleful sound."

Much to Miss Mason's relief, Alice came next, and she was always to be depended upon. She had learned "The Children's Hour," and recited so well that Miss Mason nodded approvingly.

"Very good, indeed, Alice," she smiled, "and you made an excellent selection. Elizabeth, you may copy the first two verses on the blackboard."

Polly Wiggles jumped to her feet eagerly. She loved the poetry afternoons, so she started toward the front blackboard entirely unconscious of the sensation she was causing. There was a moment of electric silence as she picked up her chalk, and then the class broke into a perfect gale of laughter, and Miss Mason turned to look with astonishment at the beautiful Amer-

ican flag that covered the back of Polly Wiggles' frock from shoulders to waist.

It was a cleverly painted flag, and only one pupil in the school could have done it. Scarlet stripes alternated with dazzling white ones, while a blue field was liberally sprinkled with stars; but neither Miss Mason, after her first startled glance, nor Polly Wiggles, when she discovered the cause of the commotion, quite appreciated its beauty.

"Allan, you may remain with Gabriel after school," announced Miss Mason grimly, switching Wiggles around so she could examine the dress more closely, and wondering distractedly what had gotten into two of her best pupils.

It was the most exciting day the class had ever known, and in the midst of the excitement the assembly-bell rang to call all the school to the auditorium to hear the results of the voting.

"Whatever shall I do?" whispered Wiggles despairingly to Miss Mason, trying to twist about so as to look down her own back. "Everybody will laugh if I march in looking

like this, but I don't want to miss hearing the names read."

"Never mind, my dear. The paint is dry, and the school is so excited that you'll not be noticed after you are once seated, and we march in among the first. I only hope that your dress is not ruined. I think, as it's water-color, that it will come out in the wash."

"It's an old dress, anyway," returned Polly Wiggles, taking her place in line, and obeying the crisp directions, "Forward, march."

Hearts beat high with excitement as they marched into the big assembly-room where all the other classes in the school were gathering. Bows were hastily perked up, and neckties straightened, as one by one the pupils took their seats. Alice and Elizabeth, by careful maneuvering, managed to sit side by side, and both twisted around to smile at Jeannette and Marion, who were two rows behind with the older girls.

"There's that horrid Jane Juggins," whispered Alice softly in Polly Wiggles' ear. *"Will* you look at her self-satisfied 'spression."

"She looks like a cat that has swallowed a canary," breathed Wiggles wickedly, choking back a giggle as she inspected blonde, complacent Jane, who was already assuming a queenly air. "Do look at her airs and graces, and watch her toss her head,—it's killing. If she doesn't look out, her barrette will fall off."

"Hope she won't be queen. It would spoil the whole May Frolic," responded Alice behind her hand. "But she's so certain-sure, that she's already asked her Maids of Honor. Would you think she'd dare?"

Further conversation was checked by the arrival of Miss Helen, and as she mounted the platform-steps, Polly Wiggles felt a little thrill shoot down her spine. "My, what fun it would be!" she thought to herself, "to have one's name read aloud as May Queen, and to march first in the big parade."

"Oh, oh, why doesn't she begin?" buzzed Alice flouncing about in her seat impatiently. "I'll burst if she doesn't tell us soon. My hands are just as cold as ice, and I prickle right up to the roots of my hair."

Luckily for Alice's peace of mind, Miss Helen chose to begin at once, and, taking up a big sheet of paper, she smiled at the school and said, "I am pleased to announce that the greatest number of votes have been cast for a pupil who has high standing both in lessons and deportment."

"Then it can't be Jane Juggins," muttered Alice with satisfaction, but quieted at a pinch from Polly Wiggles.

"The largest number of votes for Queen," resumed Miss Helen clearly, "were cast for Elizabeth Eaton. Elizabeth, will you please come forward so that the school may see their future Queen?"

Polly Wiggles nearly jumped out of her skin.

"I told you so," hissed Gabriel in her ear. "Didn't I vote for you?"

"No, no, it's a mistake," gasped Wiggles, shrinking back in her seat. "She doesn't mean me; it's a mistake." She crouched down in her chair, trying to make herself as small and inconspicuous as possible, for every one was turning to stare at her. Seeing she made no effort to

move, a dozen eager hands pulled her up, and in a daze she felt Alice give her a violent shove forward.

"You're Queen,—go up on the platform," directed Alice happily. "Oh, I'm so glad; I'm so glad I don't know what to do. Won't Jane be furious?" Unconsciously she jumped up and down in her seat, until a poke from Gabriel brought a startled "Ouch!" from her.

"Say, what do you think you are,—a jumping-jack?" he asked heatedly.

Alice subsided hastily, after a quick glance around at Jane. "She looks like a thunder-storm," she thought with satisfaction.

As for Polly Wiggles, her knees felt like bits of tissue paper as she walked forward to the platform steps, until, like beacon-lights, she saw Jeannette's happy smile and Marion's beaming face, followed by their quick look of surprise as they spied the flag that stood out in bold relief against the back of her white dress. Their puzzled expression and the buzz of astonishment that swept over the room acted as a bracing tonic to her nervous embarrassment, and, tossing her

heavy black curls, she gave the school such a mischievous glance that Gabriel the irrepressible bobbed up in his seat to give three cheers for "Queen Polly Wiggles," which every one echoed with a will; that is, all but Jane Juggins, who laughed disagreeably. Then, lowering her voice, she whispered to Kitty Lane who sat next to her, "Whoever chose that little Gypsy tomboy for a Queen? Why, she's a fright."

"Well, I think she's lovely," returned Kitty with spirit. "She's as nice as can be, and I voted for her, and evidently lots of others did, too."

No one was more delighted at the outcome of the election than Miss Helen. Polly Wiggles was a great favorite with all the teachers, for she was so natural that she chattered away as easily when talking to them, as she did with her best friends, and they all rejoiced at her good fortune. Nevertheless, popular opinion had been that an older girl would receive the honors, so Miss Helen welcomed her with delight.

There was a little stir of interest as Miss Mason rose to her feet, and made a little announce-

ment that was not on the program. "I just wanted to explain that our May Queen has unexpectedly been decorated ahead of time by our school artist," she told the interested audience, while Allan did his best to disappear from the laughing looks thrown in his direction. But he was made more miserable than ever, and wished the ground would open and swallow him, when Miss Helen rose to announce that "Allan Harrison had been chosen May King."

"Both King and Queen from our room," whispered Alice rapturously; "O goody!"

"Pooh, I knew Polly Wiggles would be Queen," crowed Gabriel triumphantly, standing up in his excitement and giving Allan a push that sent him out in the aisle more suddenly than he expected.

"Kitty Lane was second choice for Queen, and Richard Gerard for King," announced Miss Helen, stepping forward to congratulate Elizabeth and Allan, and to offer them seats on the platform.

"Now, Queen Elizabeth, will you please announce the names of your Maids of Honor?"

Polly Wiggles arose in blushing confusion, and took a graceful step forward.

"I—I thank you for choosing me Queen," she began, smiling at the many friends who were rejoicing with her; "and I choose for my Maids of Honor, Jeannette Eaton, Marion West, Alice Maxfield, and Kitty Lane" she finished, feeling it would be courteous to include the little girl who had been second choice for Queen, and whom she liked very much.

Then the four fortunate Maids had to walk forward to be inspected by the school and receive their share of applause, while the Queen laughed till deep dimples showed in each cheek and every curl on her head danced with excitement.

It really seemed a dream to Polly Wiggles. Never in her wildest day-dreams had she thought to be the fortunate girl selected as Queen of the May. "Won't Mother and Daddy be s'prised?" she whispered to Jeannette, who had been given a seat next to her sister. "And won't it be fun for us to march first in the parade?"

Jeannette gave her sister's hand an ecstatic

squeeze. As for Marion and Alice, they were nearly overcome by the unexpected honor, as they afterward explained.

"Now, King Allan, call forth your three Courtiers, and your Herald," prompted Miss Helen to the abashed King, who was greatly regretting his unruly paint-brush, and hoping he would not have to forfeit his newly-won crown because of his mischievous prank.

"I proclaim Gabriel LeClare as my Herald, and name Dick and Billy Gerard and Hugh West as my Courtiers," announced Allan in tones that could be heard all over the auditorium.

"Isn't that lovely?" whispered Jeannette. "We are all such good friends that we'll have a lovely time. Oh, Wiggles, aren't you happy?"

"Happy" was not a forceful-enough word for what Polly Wiggles felt, she was sure. She was quite positive that never again would she feel such a tingle of rapture as that which thrilled her through and through when her name was read aloud.

School came to an end at last. Back in the classroom, a disconsolate King and Herald

looked longingly out of the window at the merry, laughing groups that surrounded the popular Queen, her attendants, and the Courtiers as well. It was hard to miss all the fun on the big day of days, and Allan resolutely decided to control his paint-brush, while Gabriel sadly vowed not to take any more snakes to school, in the lonely hour that followed.

As for the rest of the May Day attendants, they raced after a panting, disheveled Queen, down the road that led toward The Lilacs, as fast as they could follow her twinkling white-shod feet.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CUBBY GOES VISITING

JEANNETTE tiptoed down the staircase with bated breath, and out into the pantry, where Hannah was making butter-balls for dinner.

"We're nearly ready to leave, Hannah," she whispered, closing the pantry door behind her, and watching the swiftly-moving butter-paddles with interest. "Cubby is in bed for her nap, and sound asleep. Isn't that lucky? Do let me roll a butter-ball."

"Now, Miss Jet, you'll get your pretty dress all greasy," objected Hannah anxiously, eyeing the red swiss dress with its narrow black-velvet trimming, and the scarlet straw hat laden with red-and-black cherries, approvingly. "There goes a piece on your black silk sock now!"

"No, it didn't; it went on my slipper," returned Jeannette thankfully, "and it will rub

right off the patent leather. But I guess maybe I'd better not try to do it now, 'cause after we do our shopping, we're all going over to call on Mrs. MacAllister at White Birches, and so I mustn't get mussed."

"'Pears to me you're home from school mighty early," remarked Hannah, clearing a place for Jeannette to sit down while she waited for the others, and peeping in at the kitchen clock.

"Oh, Elizabeth and I were excused at one o'clock," Jeannette explained happily, "'cause we're going into town with Mother, Grandma, and Aunt Elsie, to get the materials for Elizabeth's May-Queen dress, and the Maids-of-Honor dresses, too. Won't it be fun? I think it was perfectly lovely that Wiggles got the most votes, and I'm so excited it seems as if I could hardly wait till May Day. I wish Marion, Alice, and Kitty could have gone with us to-day. but Miss Helen said she couldn't excuse so many, so they asked us to get whatever we thought best. Mother and Grandma will decide. It won't take us very long. Then we're

going to stop and call on Mrs. MacAllister on the way back, and that's why we want to go while Cubby is asleep, 'cause she'll cry and cry if she can't go calling with us to see the white pony, and Mother says she's too little."

"Dat chile knows you-all are going, jest the same," put in Hannah wisely, rolling the butter with experienced hands. "'Cause yesterday she came down to the kitchen and done tole Mandy that some day soon she was going over to call on dat white pony and de white dog. She's jest plumb crazy over them."

The pantry door opened a crack.

"She's going to be terribly disappointed," sighed Polly Wiggles sadly, cautiously edging through the narrow space. "I do hope she'll take a long, long nap, 'cause if she finds us all gone when she wakes up, she'll guess where we are right away, and be heartbroken. She heard Grandma say that Mrs. McAllister had asked us all to come over. She's teased and teased to go with us ever since, and, though Mother said 'no,' she's been playing 'lady-going-visiting' ever since. Mother promised to take her over

the *next* time she went, but that didn't seem to satisfy her a bit. I never saw her so possessed to go anywhere before, did you, Jet?"

Hannah laid down her paddles long enough to inspect Polly Wiggles from head to foot.

"You both suah looks like red robins to-day, 'pears to me," she said, smiling broadly. "Dat white swiss o' Miss Elizabeth's all sprinkled ovah with red dots, and trimmed with dat narrow red-velvet ribbon, and those bobbin' red cherries on dat scrumptious white straw hat looks good enough to eat. Ah don't know which dress is prettiest—Ah declare Ah don't."

Wiggles placed one white-shod foot on the edge of Jeannette's chair, and sprang nimbly up beside the butter-crock, despite Hannah's ohs and ahs of protest,—where she sat swinging her red pocketbook to and fro.

"You know—," she began, but was interrupted as the pantry door opened the third time, to admit Mrs. Eaton.

"Run along, children," she told them, stopping to adjust the narrow red-velvet streamers on Elizabeth's saucy hat. "Grandma and Aunt

Elsie are already in the car, and we want to get off as quietly as possible. Cubby is sleeping nicely, Hannah, and if you peep in at her occasionally, it will be all right to finish your work down here first. If she wakes, let her play in the Forget-me-not room so she won't see us when we stop at White Birches. She'll be heart-broken if she sees us all go and she has to stay home. I wish it wasn't Mandy's day out, but we had to go when the children could be excused from school."

Cubby had been suspicious all morning. She smelled excitement in the air, and had only gone to bed under strong urging, but, though the girls subdued their giggles, the closing of the car-door wakened her, and she lifted her head to listen. But she screwed her eyelids tight together and was apparently sleeping soundly when Hannah poked an inquiring head in the "Nest," to gaze at her. Though her eyes were closed, Cubby's mind was working busily, putting two and two together, and as soon as Hannah had departed kitchenward, up she sprang,

to run from one bedroom to the other, her bare feet making no noise on the soft rugs.

"Gone," said she, her lips quivering. "Gone, —to call on the white pony,—and they didn't take me." Two large tears brimmed in the big eyes and slid slowly down the rosy cheeks, for the disappointment was keen.

"That boy's muvver," she continued, meaning Mrs. MacAllister, "told my own Mayma to bring all the gur-rls over to see her. She didn't say, 'Bring Jet and Wiggles and leave Cubby home.' No, indeed, she said *'all,'* and 'all' means me, too."

A quick rummaging through her sisters' closet revealed still another fact,—their new swiss dresses and pretty cherry-trimmed hats were gone. Her tears changed to anger.

"They've gone all dessed up in their bestest desses and wed cherry hats," said she, with curling lip and flashing eyes, "and left me home all by self—in a nightgown. Guess I'll dess up and go call on the pony, too, before they get there."

Peeping out of the window in the Daisy room, she spied the white collie strolling across the green lawn opposite, and the sight rekindled her determination.

"Maybe that boy's muvver thinks I'm an itty bitty baby 'bout so long," she fumed, measuring off a scant six inches with her hands. "Maybe she thinks I wear long desses and sleep in a crib. I'll show her I'm just as big a gur-rl as Jet and Wiggles, 'cause I sleep in a real bed, and I know how to go a-calling, too. All you have to do is to take a ticket and leave it at the door, and then they will let you go in. Maybe Jet and Wiggles didn't 'member to take tickets."

That idea was a pleasing one. In her mind's eye she saw Jet and Polly Wiggles, all dressed up in their dainty frocks, appearing at the door of White Birches without calling-cards,—or tickets, as she called them,—and being waved away, while she herself presented the maid with a magic bit of pasteboard, and in a grown-up manner walked in under her sisters' astonished stares.

But what should she wear? Her own frocks

were discarded after one quick look,—they were too plainly little-girl dresses. She didn't have a red swiss and a cherry hat in which to look grown up,—oh, no, indeed. She didn't have anything but fine white dresses,—just like a baby,—but she'd show them.

After repeated visits to Grandma's and Aunt Elsie's closets, she decided upon a jade-green silk petticoat of her grandmother's, which swept the floor when put over her nightdress, and a beaded orange overblouse of her mother's that fell nearly down to her knees. A dainty rose-pink breakfast-jacket of Aunt Elsie's, that she had long admired, went on over the orange waist, which showed several inches beneath; "In case I should be cold," she murmured contentedly, although the day was extremely warm. Aunt Elsie's best gold-brocade evening slippers were put on next, over her own red bedroom slippers. As even then they were far too large, she tied them over each instep with Polly Wiggles' pink hair-ribbons, and then started her search for a hat.

She was sure that the others had gone shop-

ping to buy the dress-materials, and she knew that she only had a short time, so she worked feverishly, looking in boxes and on closet-shelves, and pulling things out till the rooms were in a jumble. A few weeks before Grandma Carr had purchased a purple toque covered with violets, and Cubby had longed ever since to try it on her own curly head. Now was her opportunity,—and then, too, it was a very grown-up-looking hat. At last she spied it on Grandma's top shelf, and, pulling a stool to the closet, up she clambered, dragging down a mink choker as well, that she pounced upon with glee.

The toque was large,—so large that it completely covered her head and fell to her chin, disconcerting her for a minute; but Cubby was ingenious.

" 'Spect it's 'cause I haven't long hair pinned up top," she mused, pondering deeply. A bright idea popped into her mind. Aunt Elsie had been in an "Old Folks Concert" a short time before, and Cubby had seen her dressed in an old-fashioned frock, with white hair piled high on top of her head. "The white hair isn't my

own," Aunt Elsie had explained, laughing at her little niece's look of horror at seeing Auntie "grown old" so suddenly. "It's false white hair that I bought at the store, and pinned on. All my own hair is underneath."

Into Aunt Elsie's room she scurried, and, after ransacking the bureau-drawers, at last she found the white switch and puffs tucked away in a big box where they had been put to stay until used again for another masquerade. Over her own mop of gold curls went the long switch, pinned on with dozens of Mother's bronze hair-pins. When the large puffs were added, the effect was most impressive,—to Cubby's idea of thinking,—though slightly marred by the short golden curls that would peep out over her ears.

The violet toque stayed in place with the white hair to pad it up, and, pulling on a new pair of white kid gloves that she had found in her search, she hurried over to the cheval-glass to view the effect, adding Aunt Elsie's coral beads and long ear-rings to match, although she had a struggle screwing the ear-rings in her ears.

"No one would take me for an itty gur-rl

now," she purred contentedly, spilling half a bottle of her mother's best perfume over her dress and shaking the powder-box violently. "I looks just like a Mayma."

Grandmother Carr would not have felt flattered at the comparison. She never wore earrings herself, but to Cubby they were the last touch required toward completing her costume, and she gazed at her reflection approvingly.

It was at that moment that her eyes fell upon Boots, who sat looking out of the front window with what she decided was a lonesome expression, but which was really sleepiness.

"Poor Boots," she cooed sweetly, "did they leave you home, too? Would you like to go a-visiting to call on the booful white pony and the doggie?"

It spoke much for Boot's disposition, as in ten minutes' time his small mistress had attired him in a doll's blue-gingham dress, from Polly Wiggles' doll's trunk, as well as a baby bonnet, four mittens on his paws, and a white lace veil.

Then, catching up a blue parasol of Jeannette's in one hand, and the big pocketbook that

Grandma used for marketing, and holding the protesting Boots tightly in the other, the wee bear stole cautiously down the front stairs, hoping against hope that she would find the coast clear and escape by the front door before Hannah spied her. She tripped and nearly fell several times, owing to the length of her dress, while her struggle in clothing Boots had rather damaged her costume, but her spirit was undaunted.

"Oh, my ticket," she murmured distractedly, pausing in the front hall and looking back uncertainly. "I forgot to 'member it, and what shall I do?"

She knew it would take far too long to go back up-stairs, especially with the heavy and violently struggling Boots in one arm, and she was afraid to put him down for fear he would run away. Strange to say, in spite of his "lonesome" expression, Boots did not seem anxious to go calling. So it was with a thankful heart that she noticed the plate of calling cards on the hall console-table. It took but a minute to select one, with "Mrs. Clayton Campbell" engraved upon it.

Of course the name meant nothing to Cubby,—she was attracted solely by the black border around it, which she greatly admired.

Then, pausing to adjust Grandpa's shell-rimmed glasses over her mischievous brown eyes, and to fix the mink choker that added the final touch to her costume, Cubby crept out, not quite half an hour having passed since Hannah had seen her "napping" in bed.

Barely had the front door closed behind her, when Hannah opened the door from the kitchen, only to pause as the back door burst open, and Andy, the gardener, came hurrying in with a badly burned hand from a bonfire he had been making.

"Stop your groanin' or you'll be wakin' Miss Evelyn," scolded Hannah, glancing up toward the door of the "Nest," which Cubby had thoughtfully closed behind her. "She's havin' a fine nap, and if you'll set down quietly, Ah'll fix your hand and bandage it so it will feel more easy."

Andy sank into a chair as he was bid, and, never doubting but that her small charge was

safely tucked away in bed, Hannah flew to find bandages and oil.

While teetering along unsteadily on the high French heels of her "borrowed" slippers, a ridiculous little figure crossed the road, and crept up the broad steps of the beautiful home—White Birches.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AN INTERRUPTED TEA-PARTY

MRS. MACALLISTER glanced from the black-bordered calling-card to the shaking shoulders of Martha, the maid. Try as she might, she could recollect no "Mrs. Clayton Campbell" of her acquaintance.

"It's a little girl, ma'am," Martha explained hastily, "and in the queerest get-up you ever did see. But she handed me the card and asked for Mrs. MacAllister with such a grand air, that I showed her into the music-room."

Mrs. MacAllister descended the staircase hastily, and paused in the music-room doorway with twitching lips, as a queer little figure, clutching a violently agitated bundle, slid to its feet and advanced with high-held hand.

"How do you do," said Cubby formally. "I've come to call."

"Won't you have a seat?" murmured Mrs. MacAllister, controlling her amusement with difficulty, and casting an apprehensive glance at the violet toque, which, with the white hair, had slid over one of Cubby's ears, giving her a rakish appearance of which she was entirely unconscious.

"I am derry well, thank you," returned the visitor calmly, boxing Boots' ears with vigor to quiet him, and clambering with much puffing and panting into a high wing-chair.

"I do wonder who the cunning baby is," thought Mrs. MacAllister with enjoyment, stealing a look at the demure visitor, who sat bolt upright on the edge of the big chair. "Her face looks familiar, but in that rig it's hard to identify her."

Donald, on his way to the porch, glanced in casually, and then, with a twinkle in his dark eyes, strolled forward to have a better view of this self-possessed caller, who was greatly enjoying the sensation she was creating.

"Donald, this is—this is—," Mrs. MacAllister began uncertainly, but paused abruptly. It

would be too ridiculous to say, "Mrs. Clayton Campbell,"—and yet who *was* this cunning, mischievous youngster, with her highly amusing grown-up airs that contrasted so strongly with her dimpled baby face.

"I am Evelyn Eaton," announced Cubby easily, drawing a black-bordered handkerchief from her bag and wiping her nose with a flourish that nearly upset Donald's gravity. He stooped hastily to conceal his amused face, and to pick up two mittens which Boots had lost in his frantic struggles.

"Are these yours?" he asked, not daring to glance at his mother, whose shoulders were heaving suspiciously. "They look as if they had dropped from the—the— What *is* it, anyway?" he inquired curiously, eyeing the uneasy, wriggling bundle from which a plaintive "meow" had issued.

Cubby twitched the baby bonnet about and threw back the lace veil, revealing an unhappy furry face which she proceeded to dust off with her black-bordered handkerchief, much to Boots' discomfort.

"It's Boots," she explained gravely, as she cast a lightning glance about the attractive room; "and I brought him over to call on the pony and the lovely white doggie. He was lonesome," she finished, looking from one interested face to the other with wide, dark eyes.

"That was very thoughtful of you," assured Mrs. MacAllister, completely charmed with the child. "Now, suppose we have afternoon tea together, and then we'll all go out and visit the ponies. How would that be?"

Cubby's smile was ecstatic. Never had she dreamed of being served afternoon tea like a real, grown-up young lady. What a lot she would have to tell Wiggles and Jet! But would she dare stay? She had no desire to meet Mother, Grandma, and the rest, face to face, until safely home again, for she knew very well that punishment would follow her naughty escapade,—and follow quickly.

"I—I think maybe I'd better be going," she ventured uncertainly, sliding to the floor and losing one gold slipper with a bang.

"Oh, you've only been here a few minutes,"

urged Donald, eager to keep her talking. He stooped as he spoke to tie her slippers on more securely, and completely won the wee bear's heart by the grown-up, dignified manner in which he assisted her back into her high chair.

"Just as if I was a real lady," she thought gleefully. "Guess I'll stay and have tea and see the ponies after all. It will be a long, long time before Mother and Mayma will be here."

"I used to know your mother and Aunt Elsie well, when I was a little girl," Mrs. MacAllister continued, hoping that she would be able to remember all the details of her visitor's remarkable costume after she had gone.

"You have sisters, too, haven't you?" chimed in Donald, anxious to hear more about the girl that could turn cart-wheels better than most boys.

Cubby drew herself up with a grand air, while, parrot-like, there dropped from her lips a sentence that she had heard Hannah use only that morning in speaking to the laundress' daughter, who was the eldest of eight.

"Oh, yes, but it isn't an easy thing to be the oldest of a family, for you have—you have—

'sponsibilities," she finally brought out triumphantly, the word having nearly eluded her.

Donald choked, but politely turned it into a cough. "Oh, are you the oldest?" he questioned, to keep her talking.

"Oh, yes. I'm a hundred," she returned unexpectedly, pushing back the spectacles that *would* slip off her nose.

Mrs. MacAllister bit her lip. "And your sisters, how old are they?" she asked in carefully controlled tones.

"Oh, they're only itty gur-rls," the wee bear responded. Then, lest conversation might languish, she added sorrowfully, "And sometimes they're derry naughty."

"That's too bad. What do they do?" inquired Mrs. MacAllister, duly shocked at Cubby's horrified tone.

"Well, sometimes they run away," returned Cubby virtuously, smoothing her skirt with a solemn air. Then, as the conversation seemed in danger of becoming a bit too personal, she changed the subject abruptly.

"This is a pitty house, but you have a drefful

lot of windows to wash," she announced suddenly, just as Martha entered, wheeling the tea-wagon.

Martha, with shaking shoulders and a hasty cough, left the room at a low-voiced remark from Mrs. MacAllister, and Cubby gazed after her thoughtfully.

"You know, I fink maybe your maid is sick," she confided in a stage whisper to the delighted Donald. "Her face is all wed, and she shakes all over as if she had chills and fever,—and she coughed, too."

"Maybe she's getting whooping-cough," suggested Donald joyously. "Have you ever had it?"

Cubby shot him a suspicious glance, but his face was perfectly sober.

"Yes, I've had it, years and years ago when I was only an itty gur-rl 'bout three," she replied severely. "You cough and cough and cough, and sometimes you throw up, too. Does your maid throw up?"

"I—I don't think so. I guess she just has a cold," returned Mrs. MacAllister unsteadily as

she poured three cups of cocoa and topped each with big spoonfuls of whipped cream, while Cubby eyed the dainty plate of cakes with satisfaction. "Do—do you care for cocoa and cakes?"

"Oh, yes, I like frosted cakes derry much, thank you. And cocoanut cake, and cheese, and mince pie, and bananas better'n anything else," continued Cubby rapidly, naming over with much gusto all the things that she was not allowed to eat, and which she coveted. "Do the ponies like bananas?"

"No, but they love apples, and we'll give them each one when we go out to see them," Donald smiled, handing her a gold-and-white cup of cocoa and passing the cakes.

Cubby stirred her cocoa into swirling eddies, unmindful of the greedy glance that Boots was giving it. It was the first thing Boots had seen all that sad afternoon that interested him at all, and the nearness to the whipped cream was more than he could resist. Down went the baby bonnet over the cup, and into the froth of cream and cocoa went Boots' furry face and pink tongue.

"Naughty Boots, aren't you 'shamed?" scolded Cubby in disgust as he lifted creamy whiskers and a cocoa-smeared nose from his stolen feast.

"Let me get your kitty a saucer," suggested Mrs. MacAllister. "I didn't know that he enjoyed cocoa, too, or I would have given him some before."

"He's young, and hasn't derry good table-manners," faltered Cubby hastily, wiping Boots' whiskers with the dainty tea-napkin on her lap, in a panic at this unexpected breach of etiquette.

It was unfortunate that at this moment Bingo, the white collie, should have come strolling in, unperceived by the others. He eyed the uneasy bundle in Cubby's lap casually at first, uncertain as to what it might be. It moved,—yet it did not look like any cat he had ever seen before. Then, just as he raised his head to utter a warning growl, the object lifted a furry head from which two green eyes glared defiantly at him, and his doubt changed to a certainty. There was a scamper of feet across the polished

"Oh, yes, I like frosted cakes derry much."—*Page 251.*

floor, a huge white shape planted two paws right in the cup on Cubby's lap, sending a trickling stream of cocoa to the floor, while a flying bundle of fur and lace veil gave a quick leap to the piano, where it stood spitting violently and uttering deep-throated yowls.

Alas for Cubby! Time had flown only too rapidly, and right in the midst of the excitement, in walked Grandmother, Mother, and the rest. They stood in startled amazement at the tableau that confronted them, and at sight of the piteous little figure that climbed down from a big chair and stood facing them with tearful eyes. If ever guilt was written on any one's face, it was on Cubby's, in spite of its smeary appearance. But not even the mixture of tears, cocoa, and frosting could disguise her from her mother's eyes.

"I—I guess I'd better be going," she gasped, sidling rapidly toward the front door, as Donald grabbed Bingo, who was making frantic efforts to climb up on the piano.

"*Cubby!*" ejaculated all three ladies in horrified tones.

"If it isn't my new violet hat!" exclaimed Grandma Carr.

"And my gold-brocaded slippers," put in Aunt Elsie. "Cubby, you wretch!"

"Oh, oh, *oh!* What is *that?*" stammered Jeannette, pointing to a long gray tail that protruded from an animated bundle of blue gingham. The bundle spit violently as Wiggles darted forward and peeped under the bonnet.

"It's—it's *Boots,*" she gasped, hardly believing her eyes. "Oh, Cubby, how could you be so naughty?"

"I—I was making a call," hiccoughed the wee bear as Grandmother and Mother swooped down upon her. "I—oh, I didn't mean to drop the cocoa." Her day of judgment had come sooner than she expected.

"Please don't scold her," implored Mrs. MacAllister as she cordially greeted her friends. "You can't imagine how I have enjoyed her visit, and the spilled cocoa was entirely Bingo's fault. Donald, will you please tell Martha to clear up the débris."

"I must apologize, Marie, for my bad baby,"

Mrs. Eaton began, looking sorrowfully at the naughty culprit, who sniffed back her tears with all dignity forgotten. "After all these years I had hoped to renew our friendship again this afternoon, but I'll have to excuse myself and take Evelyn home."

"I'll attend to Cubby," put in Grandma Carr briskly, seizing Boots from the piano and trying not to smile at the absurd little figure that gazed piteously at her. "You and Elsie and the children stay and have your visit." Through the window she glanced across toward The Lilacs, where she could see Hannah running excitedly down the path. "I'll go and reassure Hannah as to Cubby's safety, and dispose of the family wardrobe that she has borrowed." She lifted off the violet toque, white hair and all, as she spoke, revealing the rumpled gold of Cubby's own soft curls beneath.

Cubby suddenly remembered her manners. "I—I didn't mean to be bad," she gulped sorrowfully, "and—and I've had a derry nice visit, and p-please give the ponies my love. Oh, I did want to pat them!" she wailed, her tears break-

ing out afresh. It was too much, to be deprived of the delicious refreshments of which she had only had a taste, to miss seeing the ponies after all her anticipation, and to be taken home in disgrace, with such a disastrous ending to her lovely visit. Her lip quivered as she looked longingly at the little frosted cakes that now Jet and Wiggles would enjoy. Donald could not resist the tear-filled dark eyes.

"Never you mind, Cubby," he whispered softly in her ear, wondering how any one could have the heart to scold her. "Keep a stiff upper lip, and I'll come over and give you a ride with the ponies just as soon as your mother says you may go."

The wee bear's face brightened as if by magic. She shot an adoring, grateful glance at this big boy who had not laughed at her a bit, and who had treated her with as much deference as if she were a real grown-up young lady.

"Cubby," broke in Mrs. MacAllister, leaning over to kiss her cocoa-stained cheek, "I want you to come over to see me again soon. Miss Helen has told me about the May Frolic, and has in-

vited Donald to join the games in the afternoon. You know he's going to feel very lonesome that day when all the other young people are eating a picnic luncheon in the meadows. So I wonder if you and Mother, Aunt Elsie and Grandma, couldn't come over and have a May Day luncheon with us, and then we'll all drive over to see the crowning of the Queen. Don't you think that would be fun?"

Cubby's eyes danced at the idea, and she gave a rainbow smile. It wouldn't be quite so hard to leave the tea-party and take the punishment bound to follow, with the lovely luncheon to look forward to.

"Oh, oh, *oh,* thank you derry, derry much," she breathed happily, balancing herself on the tottery heels and dropping a curtsy, as she had been taught.

"Come, Cubby," began Grandma firmly, but the small sinner paused once more as she reached the door, and looked back wistfully.

"I think," she piped clearly, gazing approvingly at Donald, "that you are a derry nice itty boy;" and amid the sudden laughter that fol-

lowed her grandmother bore her hastily away.

"I do think she's the cunningest little girl I ever saw," Donald repeated enthusiastically half an hour later, as he followed Jeannette and Elizabeth, to whom he had been introducing the ponies, through the French doors into the music-room, where Mrs. MacAllister, Aunt Elsie, and Mrs. Eaton had been having a cozy chat together.

"She's a very mischievous one," put in Mrs. Eaton ruefully, with a sorrowful shake of her head and a smile at Donald, who had been much amused at Cubby's escapade.

"Now don't you punish her, Jean," pleaded Mrs. MacAllister appealingly. "She's a perfect darling, and I never enjoyed a call so much in my life. You know she puts me so much in mind of Elsie when she was that age and used to steal your little chocolate-pot. Only Elsie's eyes were blue instead of brown, but they had the same twinkle. If you ever could have heard the grown-up manner in which Cubby assured us she was a hundred——"

"Or seen the cat's expression when he saw the cocoa," broke in Donald mischievously, as Martha, trying to look as if nothing unusual had happened, appeared again with the tea-wagon and passed fresh cocoa and cakes to the visitors. "But, honestly, she was the pluckiest youngster that I ever saw. Most children would have screamed when that great big dog rushed across the room and jumped at her when he tried to get Boots. She never gave a peep."

"I strongly suspect it was because she saw that 'fate was upon her,' as we appeared just then. Did you ever see such a get-up in your life?" laughed Aunt Elsie, helping herself to a frosted cake. "The idea of that little scamp hunting up that white hair and that new violet hat of Mother's. She's been possessed for that hat ever since she saw it."

"I think, myself, that the black-bordered calling-card was the crowning touch," replied Mrs. MacAllister with much enjoyment, and a twinkle in her brown eyes. "I visualized a widow in her fifties at least, the name sounded so

impressive, and when I saw that cunning mite—" Words failed her, and she paused to laugh again at the recollection.

Wiggles and Jeannette giggled. They couldn't help but see the funny side of the prank, although at first they had been overcome with mortification. Mrs. MacAllister had been so charming, however, and so enthusiastic in her praises of their naughty little sister, that she had put them at ease immediately. Still it was too bad that this should have happened the first time they met this delightful friend of their mother's girlhood days, and the handsome, interesting boy who had lived all over the globe.

"I'm glad she approves of my nice *little* son," Mrs. MacAllister said, glancing mischievously at the tall boy as she accented the "little."

Polly Wiggles stole a look at Donald from under her long lashes, as she daintily drank her cocoa. He certainly was the most self-possessed boy she had ever met,—but no wonder. No one else she had ever known had traveled from country to country with a tutor, as she had heard Grandmother Carr say this lad had done

ever since his baby days. You couldn't call any boy who had *lived* in as many lands as she had studied about in her geography, an everyday boy, and yet he didn't seem a bit "stuck-up" either.

"Have a cake," broke in Donald, holding out a plate of plummy, tempting little cakes that could not be resisted. "You could jolly well eat a dozen of these, they're so small, and still be hungry."

"They're delicious," returned Jeannette, looking about the interesting room with a little thrill of pleasure. It was even lovelier than she imagined,—truly an Enchanted Palace.

"I'm *so* glad that we have a home at last," continued Donald with satisfaction, eating three cakes in rapid succession and glancing approvingly at the cherry-trimmed hats. "It seems jolly to be in America to stay,—and to think that next fall I'll really go to school like other boys. It's too late to start this spring," he finished regretfully.

Polly Wiggles opened her blue eyes wide. "Why, I thought you had a tutor," she began,

wondering why any boy should express the hope of going to school in such a happy voice.

"Used to have," corrected Donald. "It was only because we were always on the move," he explained hastily, seeing their look of interest. "You see, we'd be a month in one place, then two months somewhere else, and so on; and I couldn't keep changing schools like that."

"But didn't you love traveling?" asked Jeannette.

"Y-yes, it was great seeing different places, but it was hard to make friends and then go away and leave them, and have to start in getting acquainted all over again."

"Donald, I have an idea," broke in Mrs. MacAllister suddenly, clapping her hands like a girl. "Elizabeth is to be May Queen on May Day, and she and her Maids of Honor are to march first in the parade. But who ever heard of a Queen—walking?"

Donald's eyes sparkled. "Of course not," he burst out enthusiastically. "Imagine a Queen plodding along on foot. Why, she must have a beautiful chariot, drawn by white ponies——"

"And the chariot must be a bower of flowers, and the ponies must wear white harness," continued Mrs. MacAllister, watching Wiggles' shining eyes and Jeannette's happy face. "Now, Jean, don't you dare say 'No' to all my lovely plans. I have always wanted a daughter to fuss over, and instead I have a big husky son, who simply *can't* wear frilly dresses and flowery hats. Now you see this solves the problem, and I'll simply borrow your girls and pretend that Don has three sisters."

"That would be *bully,*" beamed Donald, charmed at the idea. "It's lonesome being an only child, I can tell you."

"It's lovely of you, offering the ponies," returned Mrs. Eaton, who saw the delight in the children's faces at the idea. "But——"

"No 'buts' about it," said Mrs. MacAllister gayly. "You couldn't deprive me of such a pleasure. The ponies are as gentle as kittens, and if you will let us know your color-scheme, the chariot will await the command of Queen Elizabeth and her attendants on May Day morning. Donald and I will decorate it, and it will

give us a real 'homey' feeling to be able to have a finger in the pie."

So it was settled, and as soon as the call was over, two happy, excited children raced over to Sweet Briar to tell the news to Alice, Marion, and Kitty.

"Well," said Alice solemnly, pinching herself hard to be sure it was true, "I don't mind so much now that Donald isn't a girl. He certainly looks like a Prince Charming, and his mother is just exactly as good as a Fairy Godmother, to think of anything as lovely as that. Now sit down and tell us every single thing about your visit."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

MAY-BASKETS

THE clock in the hall chimed four as the sun peeped over the hills and into the windows of the Forget-me-not room, where Jeannette and Elizabeth were sleeping soundly.

Birds were already twittering sleepily, and the lilac-plumes along the pathway nodded to the syringa-bushes opposite, as if to wish a gay good morning. A fat robin went running across the dewy lawn, busily searching for his early-morning breakfast, while a plump gray squirrel did the acrobatic feats that constituted his "daily dozen" on the limb of the big oak-tree that tapped and whispered against the bedroom window.

Suddenly through the early-morning silence came the tinkle of a banjo and the soft strum-strum of a ukelele, punctuated at intervals by

snorts and giggles and a mysterious banging and clashing. Jeannette turned over uneasily, and Polly Wiggles sat up in bed with a jerk, rubbing sleepy, bewildered eyes and pushing back tangled curls from her face.

"For goodness' sake, Jet, wake up," she whispered imperatively, leaning over to the other twin bed and giving her drowsy sister a soft pinch. "Listen to that clashing and banging. What can it be?"

Jeannette stirred restlessly and opened one sleepy eye. "It's—why, it's music," she replied in a much surprised tone of voice, stifling a yawn and listening to the plunk-plunk-plunk beneath the windows. "Why, Wiggles, if it isn't May Day!"

"So it is," responded the May Queen, putting one foot out of bed and groping about for her blue bedroom slippers. " 'The more haste, the less speed,' " she quoted with a little giggle, as she dived under the bed and emerged triumphantly with the elusive slippers in her grasp. "Look how light it is, Jet; it must be time to get up. I'm going to see what that noise is, anyway;

it sounds like a circus. Where *is* my kimono?"

"What in the world is going on at this early hour!" exclaimed Grandmother Carr's astonished voice from the hall. "It's only four o'clock in the morning, and I thought by that racket it was eight at least."

"Children," called Mrs. Eaton, appearing through the doorway, struggling into her dainty yellow kimono, "it's those ridiculous boys, and I do believe they're giving you a serenade. We're all so wide-awake that we might just as well get up and peep out at them. Slip into your kimonos and slippers."

Dr. Eaton thrust a tousled head through the door. "The young rascals," he yawned, "the idea of waking up respectable people at this unearthly hour. I suppose this is in honor of the May Queen; that's what I get for entertaining royalty unawares. Just look what you've let us in for, Woggsie. Come along, Cubby; I'll hold you up so you can see."

Jeannette sighed blissfully as she scrambled into her blue kimono and donned slippers with pompons to match. "I never dreamed that any-

thing so grown-uppy would happen to us, did you, Wiggles? It's just lovely being in a May Frolic."

"Listen, oh, listen," laughed Grandfather, joining the "nightgown brigade," as Dr. Eaton called it, and followed by Grandmother and Aunt Elsie in the first things they could lay their hands on. "I thought I heard a familiar note. They're starting the music of 'For I'm to be Queen of the May,' sure as I live."

Polly Wiggles and Jeannette dashed to the window and peeped through the curtains, stifling giggles that nearly overcame them, as they looked in round-eyed amazement at the group below.

Gabriel and Dick, with cheeks puffed to the bursting-point, were playing away as if their lives depended upon it, on combs over which tissue paper had been placed. Donald was strumming on a banjo, and Billy and Allan joined in with thumps and chords on their "ukes," while Hugh gave an occasional bang on a dish-pan he carried as a drum, or a clash to a pair of pot-lids he was using as cymbals. What

he lacked in music he made up in volume, and his rat-a-tat-tat had awakened others in the neighborhood as well. Next door, at Sweet Briar, Marion and Kitty, who were staying with Alice over night, were peeking out at the serenaders in amazement, while heads were popping from the windows at White Birches to see what all the music was about.

The combs played the melody through once, and then were laid aside. Then, accompanied by the banjo in Donald's capable hands, and punctuated by resounding clashes on the pot-lids from Hugh, all six boys sang the following ridiculous parody, giving careful enunciation to each word while the audience listened with eager ears:

"We woke to call you early, call you early, Wiggles dear,
To-day will be the gladdest time of all the bright New Year;
Of all the bright New Year, Wiggles, so merry and so gay,
For you will be Queen of the May, Wiggles; you will be Queen of the May.

"You slept so sound all night, Wiggles, we knew you'd never wake,
Unless we called you loudly as the day began to break;
So up we jumped to waken you before the peep of day,
For you're to be Queen of the May, Wiggles; you're to be Queen of the May.

"Jeannette will go out with you as you hasten to the green,
And Marion and Alice, too, will see you crowned the Queen;
The lads and lasses from the school will march with May-poles gay,
And you will be Queen of the May, Woggsie; you will be Queen of the May.

"So jump from out your bed, Woggsie, and rub your sleepy eyes.
Oh, Marion, and Kitty-Cat, and Alice, too, arise,
And gobble down your breakfast fast, it's time you were away,
For you're to be Queen of the May, Woggsie; you're to be Queen of the May.

"Arise, fair Queen, we beg of you, and don your dainty gown,
Come polish up your scepter bright and freshen up your crown;

Get out your ermine mantle that's in moth-balls packed away,
For you're to be Queen of the May, Wiggles; you're to be Queen of the May.

"We've gathered buds for you, Wiggles, the best that we could get;
Alas, the dew was heavy, so our feet got sopping wet,
So, if we've caught our death, Wiggles, and cough our lives away,
It's 'cause you're Queen of the May, Wiggles; 'cause you're Queen of the May."

A final clash on the dish-pan brought to a close the parody which Billy had written, amid the laughter of the girls and the hollow coughs of the mischievous boys.

Dr. Eaton leaned perilously far over the sill. "As a physician," he remarked gravely, but with a twinkle in his blue eyes, "I recommend bed for three hours for you all. The May Queen and her Maid of Honor wish me to extend their thanks for this delightful and unexpected early-morning concert. But, as beauty sleep is needed even by royalty, we will bid you a fond—and *hasty*—farewell."

"Here, Woggsie, toss this out to them," whispered Mrs. Eaton, handing her a box of home-made fudge that had been on the table.

Polly Wiggles' face dimpled with amusement as she popped her head cautiously between the curtain-frills. "Here's some medicine for your coughs," she twinkled. "Catch! But look out that it doesn't give you nightmares," she warned hastily, as six pairs of hands grasped eagerly at the coveted prize which Hugh dexterously caught by ingeniously holding his dish-pan up to receive it.

"Not to be taken except after meals," sang out Dr. Eaton, popping his head out again. "Now skip, you young rascals, and let me finish my early-morning nap in peace and quiet."

"That prescription holds good for these fair damsels, too," Mrs. Eaton announced firmly, as, catching up the sleepy Cubby, whose head was nodding like a drowsy poppy, she shooed the girls across the room to bed, to finish their morning snooze.

"To bed, to bed, you sleepy-head,
Or else you may expect

A pale-eyed fright your mirror bright
To-morrow will reflect,"

Aunt Elsie chanted as she scurried back to the Rosery.

"More truth than poetry to that," Grandpa called over his shoulder. "It would never do to look like pale, hollow-eyed ghosts for the Frolic, that's sure; so scamper back to bed, chicks, and don't let us hear a peep out of you till seven-thirty at least."

"Yes, and eight would be better," yawned Dr. Eaton drowsily. "Sweet dreams, youngsters."

It was hard to settle down again after the exciting interruption. Jeannette and Polly Wiggles kept breaking into stifled giggles at the recollection of the funny picture Hugh had made, with his heavy auburn hair standing up every which-way as he clashed away on the pot-lids,—and Gabriel's ear-splitting squeaks and squeals on the comb.

"Isn't it nice that Donald has got so well acquainted with the boys," whispered Wiggles with satisfaction, as she burrowed into her soft pillow and tried to compose herself for sleep.

"I just know I'll never sleep another wink, for I feel wide-awake as an owl. I do wonder what our chariot looks like, don't you? Donald said yesterday that they had just finished it, but he wouldn't tell me a thing about it,—mean thing."

Jeannette cuddled down comfortably and stared at the border of butterflies on the blue walls above. A question flashed in her mind at sight of the painted blossoms.

"Do you s'pose any one will hang May-baskets for us?" she breathed cautiously, twisting about to glance at the other bed. "Do you s'pose——?"

What she supposed did not interest Wiggles at all, for she had gone fast asleep, and though Jeannette had firmly intended remaining awake so as to be down bright and early, when she opened her eyes again there was a tantalizing odor of hot muffins in the air, and Aunt Elsie stood in the doorway, laughing at her drowsy face.

"You'd better 'up with the lark,' Jet," she said, adding in a louder tone as she ran on down the hall, "Polly Wiggles has one sock on already,

and the front porch is simply *crammed* with May-baskets."

"Hurry up and let Mother fix your hair before she goes down," advised Polly Wiggles, appearing suddenly with every glistening curl in place, and trying to fasten her pink-gingham frock with fingers that quivered with excitement. "I'll wait for you, and then, before we look at our baskets, let's skip out the back way and leave the baskets for the girls over at Sweet Briar. It will be lots more fun to wait and see our own when we come back."

"All right," agreed Jeannette, disappearing in haste. "James promised to leave Miss Helen's, and all the others for those that lived at a distance, the first thing this morning," she called back, as her sister saved time by pulling back the covers of both beds and hanging the two blue kimonos in the closet.

Twenty minutes later the baskets had been hung, and, crouched behind the briar-rose bushes that formed a thick hedge all about the place, they had the satisfaction of watching Marion, Alice, and Kitty pounce upon them with

cries of delight, while they looked unsuspectingly right over the spot where their laughing friends were concealed, as they anxiously scanned the road.

"They never dreamed who left them," Jeannette said with a little skip, as she rose from her hiding-place after the girls had given up and gone back in the house. "Let's hustle now; I'm dying to see what's at home for us."

The front porch of The Lilacs was filled from steps to doorway, and, as the two girls scampered up the pathway, a sudden stir and rustle, followed by flying footsteps around the back of the house, showed that some one had been there in their absence. There were baskets of every kind and description, some marked with Jeannette's and some with Elizabeth's name, while Cubby proudly carried in six of her very own.

"Bring them in the dining-room where we may all see them," called Mrs. Eaton as she poured the coffee. "Breakfast is ready, girls. What a beautiful display!" she added admiringly, gazing at the arm-loads of blossomy baskets that Grandfather and Aunt Elsie were help-

ing arrange on the tea-wagon and serving-table that Hannah had hastily cleared.

"I really don't believe I want any breakfast," began Polly Wiggles.

"Breakfast first, and baskets next," ordered her father firmly, giving her curls a playful pull as she hovered like some new species of bright-hued butterfly over the flowers. "We look like a busy florist's shop. In ten minutes the table may be in demand as a resting-place for more posies, and if many more baskets come in, we shall have to move out to make room for them. So come along, youngsters, and eat a good breakfast while you can."

"I'm really not a bit hungry," protested Jeannette, seating herself reluctantly, and languidly spooning her grapefruit.

"Remember that luncheon will not be till after one, as the parade only starts at twelve-thirty," warned Mrs. Eaton, buttering a muffin for the wee bear.

"Yes, and the luncheon will be a cold one," added Dr. Eaton, looking up from his bacon and eggs. "Now I want you to eat a good hot break-

fast like healthy, hungry girls, and not a nibble here and there like—like——"

"'Quirrels," prompted Cubby brightly, twisting about to gaze lovingly at her own pretty baskets. "'Quirrels like to nibble, Daddy."

"So squirrels do," agreed her father with a shake of his head. "And so do Cubby bears, and medium-sized bears, and great big bears as well."

"What a hard-hearted man you are," mourned Polly Wiggles with an affectionate glance. "Here you are, cruelly ordering about a Queen, when I should by rights be seated on a golden throne, eating——"

"Bread and honey," piped up Cubby, who knew her Mother Goose.

"Yes, honey, and nightingale tongues and delicacies like that," agreed Polly Wiggles recklessly. "Not bacon and eggs—oh, my, no! My appetite is too delicate." She paused to butter a second muffin as she spoke, while Cubby listened with rapture to this nonsensical talk. "Then if Dr. Eaton, my court physician, ordered such coarse, common food," she resumed scorn-

fully, "I would merely say with a wave of my golden scepter, 'Off with his head,' and my subjects would fly to do my bidding."

"I'd probably order a tonic for that delicate appetite," returned Dr. Daddy cheerfully, quite unmoved by Jeannette's beseeching glance as Hannah served her with cocoa. "Drink your cocoa, Jet, and, speaking of flying, I must haste away to see some patients, so farewell, my fairy fays; I'll see you later."

Breakfast at last came to an end, and the children flew to examine the lovely flower-laden baskets.

"Here, let's divide them," Polly Wiggles suggested, clearing a space for her own share and inspecting the attached cards. "Gracious, Jet, you popular young lady; here's five—seven—ten baskets for you, all beauties, and two apiece for Grandma and Mother, and three for Aunt Elsie."

"I never dreamed there would be so many, did you? Nevertheless it seems to me you have the lion's share yourself," Jeannette returned gayly. "Twelve baskets, no less, and oh, Wiggles, just

look at that gorgeous basket of Aunt Elsie's. It's the loveliest I've ever seen."

"I wonder who sent it?" demanded the May Queen with a roguish smile, as she eyed approvingly the dainty white basket filled with glowing, velvety Jack roses. "It's a perfect beauty. Look, Jet, the handle is made out of pussy-willows. Did you ever see anything so dear?"

"There's a card, too," announced Jeannette, pouncing upon it before Aunt Elsie had the chance. "Oh, ho, I thought so. It says, 'Bob,' and, though my manners forbid my looking, I'll bet a cookie that there is a written message on the other side."

"Look at her blush," twinkled Polly Wiggles mischievously, adding in a confidential aside to Jeannette, as Aunt Elsie hastily claimed her baskets and bore them up-stairs to the privacy of her own room, "Do you know, I think that Mr. Burnett likes Aunt Elsie, 'cause, ever since he rescued Cubby, he keeps coming here all the time. He says he comes to see Daddy," she finished scornfully, "but almost always Daddy's

out, and I notice he stays and talks to Aunt Elsie."

"Polly Wiggles, I didn't think anything could be lovelier than my lilac basket, but this one of yours is perfectly exquisite," Grandmother Carr said, speaking up from the window-seat, where she and Mrs. Eaton had comfortably ensconced themselves to act as audience to the "flower-show." She held up, as she spoke, a graceful birch-bark basket shaped like a canoe, in which were growing delicate maidenhair ferns and yellow and lavender wild orchids.

Mrs. Eaton gave an exclamation of delight and stooped to examine it more closely. "This looks like the young naturalist's handiwork," she cried admiringly, as she touched the nodding moccasin-flowers with caressing fingers.

"Yes, I'm sure that's from Gabriel," returned Polly Wiggles, giving it a swift glance, " 'cause no one else could ever find those flowers. But look at Jeannette's, it's lovely, too."

Jeannette exhibited with pride a round birch-bark basket filled with tiny woodland ferns and

pearly-white hyacinths whose fragrance filled the dining-room.

"Sure there are no snakes concealed within either one?" inquired Grandpa, shrinking away in mock alarm. "Or spiders, or angleworms, or any other of those dear little creatures that you girls so adore?"

Wiggles dimpled at a sudden recollection as she thrust her rosy face amid the fragrant blossoms and drew a breath of sweetness from their perfumed bells.

"Gabriel promised cross-his-heart that he wouldn't," she retorted, jumping up to examine a lavender-fluted creation brimming with pink and orchid sweet peas. "But, Grandfather, wouldn't it have been *dreadful* if we had found that snake in one of these lovely baskets, as he had planned at first?" Her tone was tragic, and her grandfather chuckled at the idea. "Just imagine Grandmother's face if it had slithered out——"

"Ugh, don't speak of it," shuddered Jeannette, making a wry face at the idea. "It makes me feel shivery even to talk about it. Look at

this darling basket woven of green reeds and filled with daffodils, instead. Isn't it a picture?"

Her grandfather privately thought that the two graceful girls in their dainty morning-dresses were the prettiest part of the picture, but he duly admired the daffodils, while Wiggles hopped up and down on one foot, and shook with some sudden amusement.

"Oh, Jet, I'm certain-sure that's the one Hugh made for you, and you alone," she teased, inspecting the pretty basket critically. Then she clasped her hands and posed dramatically. "He did it with his lily-white hands, all for you," she declaimed; breaking off hurriedly as Jeannette, with a very red face, chased her around the table. "Help, help, the Queen is being assassinated. Ouch, let go of my hair."

"Then don't be a silly," retorted Jeannette, firmly clutching the thick black curls that held her agile sister an unwilling captive, while Mrs. Eaton and Grandmother shook with laughter. "Mother says it's silly to act sentimental about boys——"

"And so it is," acknowledged Polly Wiggles,

frankly catching her sister in an unguarded moment and whisking under her arm and out of reach. "But I don't mean it in that silly way."

"Just the same, it *is* silly," insisted Jeannette loftily, " 'cause you know as well as I do, Elizabeth Eaton, that we're all good friends and he likes us all."

But Polly Wiggles was in a teasing mood. "Of course he likes us all," she persisted, "and I don't mean a silly sentimental like— But everybody knows that Hugh thinks you're the nicest girl he knows. Why, even Marion said herself that you were the only one he was going to make a May-basket for. However, if you prefer to think it was from some unknown admirer—" She paused abruptly at sound of the front-door bell, and darted out into the hall, followed by Jeannette, where they nearly collided with fat Mandy, whose face was all agrin as she waddled toward the dining-room with more flower-baskets.

"The most scrumptious baskets of all is these Ah'm totin' in," she breathed gustily, as she placed them carefully on the table and stood with

arms akimbo to admire the offerings to her "babies." "And pell-mell down the road like a skyclome went dat yeller-haired Harrison boy, pert as a cricket, while dat handsome-looking Prince Donald, who is Miss Marie's own boy, was a-dodgin' and slippin' round back of the trees over yonder, but I seen him jest the same."

Nothing could induce Mandy to call Donald anything but Prince Donald or Prince Charming after having heard the children's chatter about the Enchanted Palace. " 'Cause he holds hisself like a Prince and walks proud like one," she had insisted when Mrs. Eaton questioned her about it. "He's the one dat ought to be May King, even if he don't go to dat school, though, I must say, dat Allan Harrison is a fine looker, too. But any one with two eyes can see dat Miss Marie's boy is quality through and through, and has hobnobbed with the best in the land, yas, ma'am."

"These certainly are the handsomest baskets of all," admitted Grandpa Carr, as every one came hurrying to see them.

There were two baskets for Elizabeth and one

for Jeannette, and it was hard to choose the prettiest. Jeannette's basket was of pale-blue wicker, overflowing with pink sweet peas and blue forget-me-nots, while huge bows of shimmering blue-satin ribbon fluttered from the handle, which was twined with pink buds.

Elizabeth's basket was of wicker, too, but it was the most delicate shade of pink, and shaped like a big heart. Inside were hundreds of tiny pink Sweetheart roses and sprays of valley lilies that showered their perfumed sweetness through all the room. A twisted garland of moss rosebuds and smilax outlined the basket and formed the handle, while, tied to the top with long streamers of airy pink gauze, was a little verse which Polly Wiggles read aloud:

"A poet might try to write verses most fair,
In praise of your dimples, your eyes, and your hair,
But on this glad day,
Allegiance I pay,
And render you homage, fair Queen of the May."

"Now who has an unknown admirer, I'd like to know?" jeered Jeannette, doubling up with

mirth at her sister's blushing confusion. "No one has written poetry about my dimples and hair, and—and—I'm 'going into the garden and eat worms,' " she finished laughingly. "Now, do let's see this basket that's shrouded in tissue paper. It looks interesting."

"Oh it *is* lovely," squealed Wiggles, holding up a melon-shaped basket made entirely out of purple double violets and lined with lemon-yellow tea-roses. "Dear me, I don't know which is prettier. Just look at these yellow and violet gauze butterflies on the handle, Mother; their wings quiver like honest-truly butterflies."

"And, bless my soul, if there isn't another rhyme," Grandma Carr added, pointing to a twist of paper thrust in the midst of the dewy violets. "Your friends seem to be poetically inclined. Read it out, my dear."

"Yes, *do* read it out," implored Billy and Dick, appearing suddenly from the kitchen with their hands filled with cookies from Mandy's cookie-jar. " 'Scuse us, Aunt Jean and Grandma, for helping ourselves, but we made ourselves at home 'cause we were hungry, and

we knew you wouldn't want us to starve on your doorsteps."

Mrs. Eaton laughed at their nonsense, while Polly Wiggles hastily pocketed the first note and tried to keep the other from Billy's grasp.

"No fair, no fair, go 'long with you," she cried, as Dick joined the attacking party. "It's the Queen's privilege to read her notes in private."

"You won't be Queen till this afternoon," objected Dick as an excuse. "Ah, be a sport."

"Yes, be a sport," mimicked Billy teasingly, as he captured the paper and waved it tantalizingly above her head. "As your older male relative I consider this my solemn duty. It hurts me more than it does you, but you know,

> "My own convenience counts as nil;
> It is my duty, and I will,' "

he quoted from the Bab Ballads in self-defense. "Now, let me see." He glanced at the note in his hand with a ferocious frown. "Ah, ha, I thought so; some miserable unworthy knave is writing to our noble Queen in verse, without the Lord Chancellor's permission. Call forth the guard!"

"Oh, Billy, let me see it," coaxed Polly Wiggles imploringly. "I don't believe it says a single thing."

"You don't? Well, keep your hands off and I'll read it out loud. Just listen to this tender effusion:

"My every thought a butterfly,
That, wafted by my eager sigh,
Would spread its wings of palest hue,
And far away would fly—to you."

"What do you think of that, Aunt Jean? No one sends me things like that," put in Dick plaintively. "Who sent it?"

"How should I know?" retorted Polly Wiggles coolly, much amused because she knew that both boys were racking their brains to try and think who it might be.

"I think it's lovely," said Jeannette loyally. "It's lots better than most valentines."

"But I refuse to allow my youthful cousin to receive such missives," returned Billy with a grandfatherly air, as he pocketed the note for his own private purposes, hoping he would be able to find out whose handwriting it was. "Now,

what I really came to say was, that it is eleven o'clock, and Marion called out to say that she and Alice and Kitty would be over in fifteen minutes, as they were going to dress here. So unless our fair Queen wants to be left behind, methinks she'd better skedaddle and don her glad rags. Don said the chariot would be at the gate for you at twelve, and three-quarters of an hour will be far too short a time for you girls to primp."

Polly Wiggles swept a low curtsy. "The Queen will bid you all good day, she goes to don her fine array; in coronation robes of state, she'll meet you later at the gate. But she would warn that you, as well, had better hustle home pell-mell, and don your suits of Lincoln green, or else I fear you'll not be seen, as Courtiers your Queen to aid, a-marching in the big parade," she chanted extemporaneously as she mounted the stair-case.

It was not until she reached the top, and the ringing of the doorbell announced the arrival of the Maids of Honor, that Billy discovered that the note which he had tucked in his pocket —was gone.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE MAY FROLIC

THE grandfather clock was striking twelve as Donald ran lightly up the front steps of The Lilacs, and hurried on into the hall. He paused at the foot of the winding staircase to gaze appreciatively at the pretty scene above.

"An artist ought to paint that and call it 'Spring,'" he thought to himself as he admired the bevy of laughing girls who were clustered in an animated group on the landing above, entirely unaware of his presence. He drew farther back into a shadowy corner as Jet jumped up from the window-seat where she had been comfortably ensconced as she listened to the laughing chatter and good-natured banter that was going on, and straightened the cherry-blossom wreath on her long dark curls.

Through the casement-windows a straying

sunbeam peeped in, making a glory of Marion's ruddy locks and bringing out glints of gold in Alice's fair hair until it looked like a nimbus about her head.

"Is my wreath on straight?" inquired Marion anxiously, shaking out her gauzy green ruffles as Alice leaned over to arrange the wreath of apple-blossoms she was wearing.

Jeannette eyed her admiringly. "Yes, trust Alice for arranging it artistically, and in those pale-green net dresses over the green slips, and with those snowy blossoms in your hair, you and Alice look exactly like wood nymphs."

"Are you intimately acquainted with many wood nymphs?" quizzed Kitty mischievously, as she bent her own head, with its short brown curls, so that Jet could settle the pink cherry-blossom wreath to her liking.

Marion with a hand on the banisters, paused to glance back over her shoulder. "I *love* your green dresses over the pink, with the cherry-blossom crowns," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "It was such a pretty idea having two of us in green and white, and two in green and pink, and

I'm so glad they decided this way, 'cause pink would have sworn at my hair."

"If we look like wood nymphs," Alice added approvingly," you and Kitty-Cat certainly look like dryads, and Elizabeth looks like a rose that had come to life."

"Who's talking about me? My ears burn," Polly Wiggles cried gayly, and Donald caught his breath at the dainty vision that floated down the polished stairs as lightly as a rose-petal borne along by the breezes.

Never had Elizabeth looked sweeter than in the dainty pink-net frock, with its fluttering pink ribbons, and slippers and socks to match. Donald thought that Alice's description had been a good one, for she did look like a very rosebud of a girl, in her gauzy gown with its petal-shaped rosy ruffles. A high-pointed coronet of pink rosebuds crowned the dusky mass of curls that framed the soft oval of her face. Half-way down the stairs she paused shyly, while the rose color deepened in her cheeks, as she spied Donald for the first time, and saw the admiration in his dark eyes.

"Laws sake, if mah baby don't look sweet enough to eat," chuckled Mandy, popping her bandanna-covered head out from the pantry, with Hannah peeping from behind. "You-all looks powahful handsome in those get-ups, jest like a bunch o' posies. Heah's Prince Donald a-waiting to see you, honey."

Donald looked puzzled as he saw the startled glances the girls exchanged at Mandy's remark, and he wondered anew why she always addressed him as "Prince." It was not the first time. He had noticed it before on several occasions, and once even Alice had inadvertently blurted out "Prince Cha—" when speaking to him, and then quickly corrected her mistake.

"It's a lowly prince who humbly kneels before the Queen of May," he protested half laughing, as he sank to one knee. "Prithee tell me, fair Queen, why does yon dusky damsel dub me 'Prince'? It makes me feel exactly like a collie pup," he explained ruefully, with a quick glance upward.

Much to his astonishment, Polly Wiggles was plainly confused, but she recovered her com-

posure almost immediately and shot a warning glance at Alice, who turned a giggle into a cough.

"Oh, oh,—I s'pose Mandy thinks you have hobnobbed with all kinds of royalty because you've lived abroad so much," she stammered with heightened color, giving him a swift glance. "How nice he looks!" thought Polly Wiggles, as she noticed with approval the immaculate white-linen suit he was wearing. "It's silly of me to blush like a goose over Mandy's remark, but I *can't* tell him that we called him Prince Charming. It would sound too silly,—and yet some day some one of us is going to call him that to his face and feel like going through the floor."

A sudden idea flashed into her mind. "Don't you think Donald should be rewarded, or knighted or something, for offering us the chariot?" she asked meaningly, turning to the others. They seized the idea with enthusiasm.

"Dub him 'Sir,' or 'Lord,' or—or 'Prince,'" suggested Jeannette daringly, suppressing a smile at her sister's ready wit.

"I dub you Prince Donald," Polly Wiggles announced solemnly, as she tapped him lightly on the shoulder with the rose-garlanded silver scepter she carried. "Now if we do call him 'Prince' by mistake, it won't sound so funny," she reflected with secret satisfaction.

Donald entered into the spirit of make-believe with due solemnity.

"I thank you for the honor, O Queen," he responded, producing a package from his pocket which the girls eyed curiously. "Many leagues have I traversed, and many dangers have I overcome, to bring to you this casket containing baubles which I offer at your feet. Though they are unworthy of a Queen's attention, still, if they might deck the royal party on this great gala day, it would bring joy and gladness to the one who sends them, my mother, the Fairy Godmother who dwells at the Enchanted Castle of White Birches."

It was coincidence, of course, that his laughing reply should border so closely on their own fancy of the Enchanted Palace and the Fairy

Godmother, but to the girls it was little short of miraculous.

"How did he know? I'm beginning to think he honestly *is* a fairy Prince," Marion breathed in Jeannette's ear.

"Oh, Queen of May, I offer you this treasure-casket and trust it may please your Royal Highness," continued Donald, banging his head three times on the lower step, and rising to his feet as he handed her a pink-satin box.

"What does he mean? What's in the box?" demanded Kitty, laughing at his foolishness. "Oh, look at the cunning white-kid cases inside!"

With eager fingers the girls explored the dainty cases marked with their names.

"A string of pearls for each one of us to wear! Isn't that lovely!" breathed Jeannette rapturously, as she lifted the gleaming string from the pink jeweler's cotton. Then clasping it about her throat, she ran to the hall-mirror to admire the effect.

Polly Wiggles gave a little cry of pleasure.

"My pearls are just the color of my dress," she exclaimed happily, holding up a necklace of tiny pink pearls for them all to admire. "I just love them, Donald, and it was dear of your mother to give us such a delightful surprise. She certainly is a real Fairy Godmother."

"What did I tell you?" crowed Alice under her breath, as she bent to fasten the strap of her white slipper. Again the glance flashed about, and Donald, who had heard the whisper, felt more puzzled than ever.

"There's some kind of a joke," he reflected sagely, "and I'll need to turn detective to find out what it is, for they'll never tell me."

"Girls, do come and see the chariot," called Aunt Elsie enthusiastically from the veranda. "It's a perfect beauty."

There was a laughing scramble as the five excited girls, with all royal dignity forgotten, rushed pell-mell for the front door. As he sauntered along behind, a confused babel of delighted comment floated back to Donald's ears.

"Oh, oh, did you ever——?"

"Like a real Cinderella coach."

"All made of pink roses."

"The loveliest thing I ever saw."

Polly Wiggles' smile alone well repaid Donald for all the time and labor he had spent in decorating the basket-carriage that had once been a mere pony cart, but which his clever fingers had transformed into a flower-chariot fit for Titania herself.

Hundreds of pink tissue-paper roses had been used to conceal the original carriage, which was now a bower of rosy bloom. Great garlands of rose-pink buds twined the wheels and festooned the white reins and harness, while pink plumes nodded behind the ears of Snow Queen and White Beauty, as they tossed their snowy manes and impatiently pawed the ground.

"You look like a fairy Princess," he murmured admiringly, as he helped Polly Wiggles into the huge pink rose that formed her seat high above the others, while the Maids of Honor grouped themselves about her.

"I feel more like a Rose Princess," she dimpled in amusement, as she gazed with delight at the canopy of rose-petals that shielded her from

the sun. "Where did you ever get all these roses? There must be thousands."

"We made them," Donald explained, as he seated himself at her feet and gathered up the reins.

"Oh, are you coming with us?" inquired Marion in surprise.

Donald shot her an amused glance. "Who did you suppose was going to drive? You girls couldn't, all dressed up in those mermaidy-looking dresses, so Miss Helen appointed me official coachman," he returned with satisfaction. "Are you all comfortably settled now? If you are, we'd better trot along unless we want to be late. Every one is assembling at the Post Office, and it's well past twelve now."

Cubby, standing on the front porch, strained her eyes until the flower-coach was a mere speck in the distance. Then she trotted happily in the house to ask endless questions of every one she met. She kept up a running chatter of excited comment all the while she was being dressed in her daintiest frock, and danced down at the

He helped Polly Wiggles into the large pink rose that formed her seat.—*Page 299.*

sound of her grandfather's voice, with a beaming face and starry eyes.

"Well, well, if little Miss Snippets isn't all dressed up in her bestest frock, too," teased Grandfather, as she trotted at his heels.

"You ought to see the crowd that has collected," he continued, turning to the others. "When I came from the village a few minutes ago, the streets were lined with carriages and automobiles, and it looks as if every one and his daddy is out. I do believe that all Meadowbrook and the surrounding towns have gathered for the fun, and I noticed several photographers. I never dreamed that a children's parade would be such a source of interest."

Aunt Elsie hurried down the stairs, hastily tucking in a few stray hairpins. "Let's go out on the lawn," she suggested, leading the way to the rustic seats that James had placed for them on the grass. They were joined by Mrs. MacAllister, who settled down cozily beside Mrs. Eaton.

"Helen told me," she explained to the others,

"that all the surrounding towns had been invited, and, from the appearance of the avenue, it looks as if all invitations had been accepted. Many families are making a picnic of it, and will bring lunch and spend the day in the meadows, where seats have been arranged so that they can see the coronation afterward. It really has been planned very well. There is parking space for vehicles, and, in addition to the games and races by the children, the Meadowbrook team will have a ball-game in the afternoon. It's really a gala day, and every one is interested in making it a success."

"Yes," replied Aunt Elsie, picking up Boots, who had followed her out, "there is considerable talk of having the parade every year and calling it 'The Children's Day,' if this is a success. I think it would be a lovely scheme."

"So do I," responded Mrs. MacAllister vivaciously; "and I think it was a splendid plan, asking the cottagers to decorate. Won't that long line of lanterns down the avenue look lovely when they're lighted for the return parade at dusk? Sam is putting ours up now, and your

place looks very festive." She glanced about as she spoke, at the long strings of bobbing lanterns that James had festooned from tree to tree all about the grounds.

"Listen! What's that?" cried Mrs. Eaton, holding up a warning finger. Far down the road they could hear a faint strain of music and the tramp of marching feet. Cubby squirmed with impatience and clambered up on her grandfather's knee, holding her breath with eagerness as the sound came nearer and nearer.

"It's the Meadowbrook Fife and Drum Corps that they invited to lead the parade," volunteered Grandma Carr. "Hark, there's a bugle. That must be Gabriel, riding before as Herald. Look, look, Cubby; here they come."

Cubby folded her chubby hands and stared with eyes like full moons.

Gabriel dashed ahead on a fat brown pony, blowing a bugle and announcing importantly with every toot, "Make way for the Queen of May, make way for the Queen of May," though no one made any effort to block the road.

Four abreast, the Meadowbrook Fife and

Drum Corps marched next, with the sun flashing on their bugles and on the rows of gilt braid that trimmed the leaf-green uniforms they wore. They played so valiantly that it was hard to keep from marching in time to the stirring strains, and Cubby's foot went tap-tapping against her chair while ecstatic shivers ran down her spine.

At Miss Helen's suggestion the sewing-classes at the school had made Lincoln-green costumes for the King and his attendants. It gave a picturesque effect to the parade, and as Dick, Billy, and Hugh went marching past, with heads in the air and faces all agrin, as they kept step to the rat-a-tat-tat of the drummer, they made a fine showing. As body-guard to the King and Queen, they carried the bows and arrows that were to be used in the archery contest later, and it looked as if Robin Hood and his merry men from Sherwood Forest had descended on Meadowbrook for the day.

King Allan, blond as a young Viking, rode a prancing black horse that curveted and danced each time the music started.

There was a flutter of handkerchiefs all along

the avenue as he came in sight, followed by cheers from the friendly crowd as the Queen's coach, with its snow-white ponies, appeared.

"Isn't she a picture?" whispered Mrs. MacAllister, waving frantically, as the May Queen, seated in the heart of the big pink rose, rode by, nodding and smiling shyly to the interested bystanders.

"And don't the Maids of Honor look sweet and springy in those cool green dresses?" demanded Grandmother Carr, as she smiled and waved at the little girls whose faces beamed with delight, and who fluttered their handkerchiefs in return, regardless of royal etiquette, till the coach was out of sight.

"Don was pleased as Punch to drive them. It would have been rather hard to have been out of all the fun," Mrs. MacAllister continued reflectively. "Look at these lovely Maypoles. There must be a dozen at least."

There were pink Maypoles and blue Maypoles, and yellow, green, and lavender Maypoles, as well as a red-white-and-blue, and a rainbow-shaded one, so that Cubby found it dif-

ficult to decide which was the prettiest. In their light-colored summer dresses the schoolgirls looked like a flock of brilliant-colored butterflies as they fluttered about the poles, holding fast to the long satin streamers. Behind them marched the boys, carrying gay-colored balloons that floated through the air like enormous soap-bubbles.

"There goes the most important part of the parade," chuckled Grandpa Carr, as a big wagon, driven by a laughing crowd of schoolteachers, brought up the rear, loaded to the brim with baskets of lunch.

"Speaking of lunch," began Mrs. MacAllister quickly, as she rose from her seat, "our luncheon no doubt awaits us now, and if we want to be present at the Queen's coronation—" She paused suggestively and smiled at the wee bear, who slid from her grandfather's knee in a hurry, anxious for the "party" to begin. Only pausing long enough to send Boots back to the house, the little party strolled across the road to White Birches.

It was a glorious day for Cubby. To be an

invited guest at a real luncheon party would have been wonderful in itself, but Mrs. MacAllister had planned the entire luncheon with a thought to her small guest's enjoyment. So the first thing that greeted their eyes, as they entered the paneled dining-room, was a wreath of pink roses suspended above the table. From the wreath fluttered long pink Maypole ribbons that were fastened at each place to pink basket-favors filled with candied rose-leaves.

Donald, who had hurried home after leaving the May party at their destination, seated Cubby with as much ceremony as if she had been forty instead of "going on four," and entertained her with such a grown-up conversation that her heart was filled with delight, and she even felt sorry for Jet and Wiggles, who were missing this good time.

Anxious to correct the impression she had made by her naughtiness before, she copied her grandmother's dignified manner to perfection, but nothing escaped the notice of her dancing brown eyes. Mrs. MacAllister had to repress a smile as she cleared her throat in unconscious

imitation of her mother, and ate her roll with Aunt Elsie's very gestures.

"What an unconscious little actress that child is!" she thought, catching Mrs. Eaton's amused glance, as she eyed the small mimic, who was on her best behavior and acting like a baby seraph.

Everything that the wee bear liked best appeared at that lovely May Day luncheon, and when ice-cream forms frozen into big pink roses were served, her dark eyes sparkled with delight. Her cup of joy was filled when Mrs. MacAllister opened a little white case, and clasped about her neck a short string of small pink pearls, almost exactly like those that Elizabeth had received.

"It is lovely of you, Marie, to give the children so much pleasure," Mrs. Eaton said, as Cubby lifted her face to Mrs. MacAllister for a kiss.

"If you knew what a pleasure it was to me," responded Mrs. MacAllister, rising from the table and leading the way into the hall. "You know I've threatened before to steal your girls."

Sam, Mrs. MacAllister's chauffeur, had the

automobile ready and waiting at the door to take them all to the coronation, but Cubby, proudly fingering her pearls with one hand, stopped short on the steps to dance up and down and clap her hands with joy, for, coming up the driveway, was the Queen's rose chariot, with Donald driving.

"I promised I'd take you riding with the ponies, and I'm keeping my promise," he reminded her with a merry glance, as she danced down the steps and clambered up into the Queen's rose seat. "Now hold tight so you don't tumble out, and we'll get there in a jiffy."

"Look at that child's rapt face," exclaimed Mrs. MacAllister from the car, as the ponies trotted down the broad avenue, with Cubby waving ecstatic farewells.

Over at the picnic-grounds time had slipped by rapidly. After the basket-luncheons had been eaten, King Allan and Queen Elizabeth were escorted with pomp and ceremony to their flowery thrones and the real merrymaking began.

Donald and Evelyn, followed by the automo-

bile, arrived just in time, for the coronation was about to begin. They were fortunate in finding parking space near the scene of the ceremonies, where they could watch all that passed.

It was a pretty sight. Billy, as master of ceremonies, knelt respectfully before the King and Queen, and then, advancing down the aisle formed by the Courtiers and Maids of Honor, he fastened a silver star to the Queen's coronet, and placed a crown on the King's blond hair.

Over the children's heads dogwood branches formed an arching canopy of starry white blossoms, while every breeze carried from near-by orchards the delicious perfume of crab-apple and plum blossoms that filled the air with fragrance.

Then, in rapid succession there were potato and sack races, high-jumping contests, and archery and target-shooting, while the school classes competed in drills and folk-dancing on the green turf. The enthusiastic audience, that crowded the meadows and golf links beyond, applauded vigorously each time a winner ad-

vanced to the throne to receive a prize from the May Queen's hands.

Cubby sat as upright as her swaying seat would allow, beaming on the world impartially and hoping every one would know that the May Queen was her big sister. Her eyes danced with delight when Alice received a bow and a quiver of arrows as the prize-winner in the archery contest, and when Billy advanced to receive a camera for the best high jump. Her happiest moment came when Donald, whom she greatly admired, and who had been invited by Miss Helen to try his hand at target-shooting, knelt at the Queen's feet to receive for his clever marksmanship the tiny gold pin, shaped like a rifle, that Polly Wiggles fastened to his coat.

"Say, aren't the prizes fine? The teachers gave them all," puffed Dick, appearing suddenly, hot and dirty, at the automobile door with a huge watermelon in his arms.

"Where *did* you get that?" demanded Mrs. MacAllister much amused. Dick fished first in one pocket and then in the other, finally produc-

ing a much-soiled handkerchief with which he wiped his flushed face, adding to its smudgy appearance.

"I won it in a pie-eating contest," he announced proudly, placing the watermelon carefully on the running-board of the car and seating himself beside it. "Say, but isn't it hot? I ate nine small pies, and Gabriel ate seven. I won the melon, and he got a box of candy, but somehow we don't seem to feel very hungry."

"I should think not," gasped Grandmother Carr in horror. "What will you do next? You'll probably die with indigestion to-night. I must confess that I agree with Polly Wiggles when she says, 'Aren't boys the queerest?' "

"Don't you worry about Dick," put in Mrs. MacAllister comfortably, while Dick's admiration for her mounted sky-high. "Most boys have digestions like ostriches, and the pies probably won't hurt him at all. I remember once when Donald was much younger," she continued with a reminiscent smile, "that he ate four large mince pies, and he's still here to tell the tale."

"Marion and Jeannette each won a set of books in the potato races," Dick continued hastily, thinking it wise to change the subject, "and Hugh got a bully knife in the sack race."

"How about Kitty?" inquired Aunt Elsie presently. "Seems to me that the royal party have walked off with a good many prizes."

Dick snickered. "See that sour-looking girl over there that looks as if she had swallowed a quart of vinegar?" he murmured confidentially, pointing to a sullen group just a short distance away. "Well, that's Jane Juggins, with her few particular cronies, and ever since Kitty beat her in the obstacle race and won a silver pencil, she's been sore as a boil. Kit's as light as a feather, you know, and simply sailed along like thistle-down, and Jane has worn a particularly black scowl ever since. She's disgruntled, anyway, 'cause she isn't in the royal party."

Aunt Elsie leaned forward to look, and couldn't help laughing at Dick's apt description. "There's a discontented subject, if ever I saw one," she remarked lightly. "She certainly does *not* love our Polly Wiggles, and if black

looks were dangerous, the May Queen would need a heavy guard."

"She makes me sick," growled Dick. "I only wish that Wiggles and Allan could have competed in some of the games, but, of course, royalty had to act dignified. Look, Aunt Jean, the Maypole dances come next, and they are mighty pretty. May I leave the watermelon here while I go over to watch the baseball game?"

"Suppose we take it home for you," suggested Mrs. MacAllister, making room for it at her feet.

The day passed like a happy dream for Polly Wiggles. Surrounded by her closest friends, not even Jane Juggins' cutting speeches could bother her, though the boys openly laughed each time Jane flounced by with her nose in the air.

"You're beneath her notice," murmured Allan in a teasing undertone, as Jane spoke sweetly to him, and looked right through the May Queen as if she did not exist. "Don't you feel terribly cut up about it?"

"Dreadfully," sighed Polly Wiggles with a

saucy glance at him. "My day is quite, quite ruined."

"I heard her tell one of her friends that you lacked a queenly air," confided Gabriel, appearing from the ball field and passing his candy about. "I hope you realize the seriousness of that offense. You should take lessons in nose-tilting from the scornful Jane and act as if we were the dirt beneath your feet."

"None but the noble Jane possesses the lofty dignity, the icy stare, the haughty carriage, combined with the 'I know not what,' that any queen who is a queen should possess. Now Wiggles couldn't manage an icy stare if her throne depended on it. I always wondered what it was that she lacked, and now, alas, I know," put in Billy mournfully as he helped himself to more candy.

"Oh, but the noble Jane can give coy melting glances, too," grinned Gabriel, shooting a quick glance at Allan, who scowled in response.

Little by little the crowd dispersed. At seven o'clock the line of march was resumed, and the

parade started its return journey through a lane of glowing lanterns and colored fire. Every cottage along the way had decorated, in honor of the day, with bunting, and swaying lanterns that gleamed through the gathering dusk like enormous scintillating fireflies.

White Birches had been turned into a fairy-land of colored lights, and the children halted a few minutes while Sam, assisted by James, set off glowing pinwheels and sparkling flower-pots, with Cubby waving sparklers to and fro with a happy though sleepy smile.

In front of the post-office the parade disbanded, and most of the children hurried home for hasty suppers. Down in the grove a band concert, that would last till nine-thirty, had already begun.

Donald backed the cart up to the sidewalk, and jumped down, almost colliding with the "noble Jane," as Billy insisted on calling her, who was hovering near. As he rounded up the royal party, she watched him from the corner of her eye, secretly angry because this good-looking new boy, with the beautiful ponies,

should already be on such friendly terms with the group of girls she disliked.

"All the May-Day royalties pile in," commanded Donald, hurrying back with Gabriel and Allan in tow. "We'll have to squeeze a bit to seat eleven, but I'm sure we can manage. No one needs to go home to ask, for Mother has already received permission for you all to come to White Birches for a little supper party."

"What fun," murmured Polly Wiggles, serenely unconscious of Jane's angry glances from behind, as the ponies trotted off with the load of laughing young people. "It's the lovely end to a lovely day, isn't it, Jet?"

"Indeed it is," Jeannette said smilingly in return, glancing with happy dark eyes at her sister. "Why, Donald, where are you taking us?"

No wonder she inquired, for the ponies swept past the big porch, where Mrs. MacAllister was entertaining her friends from The Lilacs and Sweet Briar, and trotted on down the winding path toward Willow Lake.

"Look, look," cried Alice, catching Marion's arm and pointing toward the rustic summer-

house at the edge of the lake. "Oh, how pretty!"

"It looks like fairyland," added Kitty, leaning forward to gaze at the bobbing lanterns that swung across the little rustic bridge and cast fantastic shadows on the round table that had been laid for eleven in the pavilion. "I never saw anything so lovely."

"It looks like a Fairy Godmother's idea," breathed Alice, as Billy assisted her from the rose coach. "Probably all she did was to wave a wand and the table sprang up through the floor, all covered with silver and china in readiness for us."

"And at the stroke of twelve 'twill vanish like a puff of smoke," declared Allan dramatically, snapping his fingers to illustrate.

"Yum-yum, I smell chicken, and I'm hungry. I hope the clock won't strike twelve yet awhile," said matter-of-fact Marion, interrupting the chorus of delighted exclamations.

"The idea of speaking of such a prosaic thing as hunger, when you can feast your eyes on an enchanting scene like that," rebuked Billy from the rear. "However, since you have mentioned

the subject, let me say that I could stand a little solid nourishment myself. A chicken wing to gnaw upon, or 'Only three grains of corn, Mother,' would help me stay the faintness that has come upon me. Lead on, MacDuff."

"Somebody take this poor starving creature and give him a bowl of broth," sang out Donald, giving Allan a laughing push to lead the way. "I'll be right along, but I have to wait till Sam comes to get the ponies."

Not much urging was necessary, for something did smell wonderfully appetizing, and they all were hungry. In the gayest of spirits they rushed pell-mell down the marble steps and across the bridge to the summer-house, while Donald handed the ponies over to the grinning Sam, and turned to help Polly Wiggles, whose floating pink ribbons had caught fast to a rose-bush. It wasn't an easy matter to untangle them, but at last he was successful.

"Pin them down with this, please do," he begged eagerly, stooping to fasten the little pin he had won to the fluttering ribbons. "There, that holds them fast."

Polly Wiggles surveyed it doubtfully. "But it's yours," she objected, the color surging in her face as she glanced at him shyly.

"It's a trophy, won for the Queen in tournament, and she must wear it," he jested, but with an air of finality, as he smiled into the blue eyes raised to his.

"Why, if here isn't Boots!" exclaimed Polly Wiggles in astonishment, glancing sharply at a dark object that came purringly forward. "He's come to join the party, too."

A chorus of calls from the summer-house sent them scurrying to join the others at the table, where sandwiches, chicken, and ice-cream were appearing as if by magic. There was a clatter of silver and china, and a babel of laughing voices that could be heard up on the porch of White Birches as the hungry children did justice to the dainty supper that Mrs. MacAllister had provided, while the grown-ups smiled in sympathy at the peals of infectious laughter.

It was the first time that Polly Wiggles had had a near view of Willow Lake, and, sinking down on the circular seat that ran about the pa-

vilion, she exclaimed at sight of the loveliness revealed, as she pushed aside the tangled wisteria vines and looked dreamily across the waters, where moonbeams were cresting the ripples with a silvery radiance, and slender white birches leaned down to gaze at their own reflections. Through the air came the delicious odor of wild honeysuckle and syringa, while showers of pink-and-white cherry-blossoms drifted with each puff of the breeze down to the rush-bordered banks.

With a tired little sigh the May Queen leaned back in her seat, but looked up with a smile as Donald solicitously tucked a cushion behind her. "Tired?" he asked sympathetically, amid the laughter and chatter about them. "It's been a pretty busy day for you."

"How about yourself?" she returned with a merry glance, as she settled herself luxuriously against the soft cushion. "I'll confess I am a wee bit tired, but it's been worth it."

"Isn't this fun?" demanded Allan, looking the picture of contentment, with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of fruit punch in the other.

"I drink to the health of Miss Wiggles, our Queen,
The loveliest sovereign that ever was seen,"

he proposed, rising with his glass in hand, and bowing low to laughing Polly Wiggles.

"How about the fair Maids of Honor?" inquired Kitty coolly, patting Boots, that had jumped in her lap. "Don't they come in for a toast, too?"

"Stay your impatience, it's not polite," reproved Billy, who had been restored to "life and health," as he expressed it, by several generous helpings of sweetbreads and chicken patties. "Now here is a toast to those that really deserve the honor," he drawled teasingly, as he lazily rose to his feet.

"A toast to the Herald, a toast to the King,
To Courtiers noble and gallant, I sing—"

"While for fair Maids of Honor in dainty array,
I propose three loud cheers, and a hip-hip hooray,"

added Jeannette rapidly before Billy could finish. She turned as she finished to survey her cousin, and couldn't repress a giggle at sight of

his astonished face at having the words taken from his mouth.

"See here, youngster, don't you know that interrupting is against all royal etiquette?" he asked in an aggrieved voice. "What I was going to say when you so rudely interrupted, was——"

"Don't say it. Listen to the band concert instead," Alice advised mischievously, pulling him down into his seat. "Doesn't it sound lovely and dreamy at this distance?"

"And just look at the reflection of these beautiful lanterns in the water," added Marion, leaning over the rail of the summer-house to admire the many colors that sparkled and shimmered in the clear lake.

Allan jumped up to inspect the decorations more closely. "I never saw any like these before," he said admiringly as he glanced at the array of silk lanterns shaped like flowers, fish, and dragons that were suspended over his head and swayed with every passing breeze.

"We brought those from Japan with us. I don't believe you could get them over here,"

Donald explained, seeing his interest. "Somebody throw me a sandwich, please."

"What a beautiful day we have had!" mused Polly Wiggles softly. "Isn't it a shame that such good times have to end?" She sighed regretfully as she listened to the soft whisper of the ripples against the bank, for they seemed to murmur mournfully, "All is over, all is over."

Gabriel looked about glumly. "Yes, all the fun is over, and now we'll have to knuckle down to spelling and history and poetry afternoons," he finished gloomily as he ate his ice-cream with gusto.

"And arithmetic exams come in the very near future," put in Alice dismally as she nibbled a macaroon. "O dear! O dear! How I hate good times to end."

"Cheer up, little one, school closes in another two weeks and we always have fun on the last day. I think it's great that they've decided to give prizes for the best poems submitted. So let your heart rejoice. Maybe you'll get one," Billy consoled her, tweaking her blonde locks.

"And maybe I won't," she retorted witheringly, but Billy refused to be squelched.

"Now Mary Ann, the star pupil doesn't seem to be worrying about exams, or letting the thought interfere with her appetite," he teased wickedly, as Marion started leisurely on her second plate of cream.

"You stop calling me 'Mary Ann.' You know how I loathe that name, and if you do it any more, I'll call you Little Willie."

"Wow, that would be a hard one to live down," Donald laughed as he tossed an olive-pit out on the grass and helped himself to more sandwiches. "Somebody tell me, please, why good times are at an end, anyway? I should think they were just beginning, with a lovely long vacation to look forward to. Just think of the jolly fine times we can all have together."

"What kind of times?" demanded practical Marion, absently twining one of Jet's long brown curls about her finger as she spoke.

"Oh,—all kinds," put in Dick rather vaguely. "Say, Don, what's the name of that little bit of an

island in the middle of Willow Lake? It would be a bully place for picnics, wouldn't it?"

"Great," Donald responded with enthusiasm as he turned to glance where Dick pointed. "You deserve a vote of thanks for such a fine idea. It's called 'Paradise Island,' I believe. We'll paddle out some day and look it over, it only takes a few minutes to get there."

"Isn't it beautiful? It looks like a Paradise," murmured Polly Wiggles as she gazed at the moonlight flooded wooded island where willow branches trailed green boughs down to the water's edge, and wild azalea was a riot of color against the background of green. "Oh, I know what we can do!" She sat up suddenly and clapped her hands. "Each one of you must tell of the special good time you are looking forward to this summer,—in verse." She glanced about expectantly, and smiled at Gabriel's stricken face.

"Oh, Wiggles," protested Marion, "that is dreadfully hard to do."

"No, it isn't," insisted the May Queen shaking her curls. "It's really lots of fun, and no one

may say a single solitary word till orders are obeyed. Verse first,—free speech afterward. I'm still May Queen till the clock strikes twelve," she added mischievously, seeing signs of mutiny in Gabriel's face, "and I *command* that you all obey. The penalty will be a ducking in the lake."

Gabriel gave an anguished howl. "Here's where I get a bath," he groaned. "You *know* I simply *can't* make up poetry."

"Yes you can," persisted Polly Wiggles encouragingly. "Now all of you think hard."

The silence was profound for a few minutes.

"I want to go fishing,
That's what I am wishing,"

piped up Dick suddenly. "Now I may talk, may I not, Woggsie? We boys could go fishing and then build a camp-fire and cook the fish on stones over at the island, isn't that a wow of a plan? You girls could help with the eats of course," he added hastily.

"Let's take some horns to toot on loud,
And have a straw-ride for the crowd,

We'd stop some place for tea at night,
Returning when the moon was bright,"

suggested Jeannette, blushing as every one applauded the idea vigorously.

"Oh, that would be bully good fun," began Gabriel, forgetting orders, and looking aghast as Polly Wiggles pointed a stern finger at him. "And—and I hope you'll invite me to come," he brought out at last apologetically amid much mirth.

Billy gave a loud "ahem."

"Let's go on a hot-dog roast,
Take marshmallows, too, to toast.
Corn and 'taters piping hot,
Would taste bully, like as not,"

he proposed, looking about the group and giving a subdued snicker at sight of Alice's and Marion's anguished expressions. "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come," he hissed dramatically.

Alice made a saucy face at him.

"Living pictures we could pose,
All dressed up in fancy clothes,

Tableaux would be fun, I know,
And perhaps we'd make some dough,"

she repeated rapidly with the anxious frown leaving her forehead.

"That's the best of all," said Polly Wiggles, much pleased.

"Such slang from the Lady Alice! Where did you pick up such a disgusting expression as 'dough?'" reproved Billy sadly. "Never do such slangy words drop from *my* lips. I fully expected after that choice phrase to have you continue thusly:

"'It would be a lot of fun,
For some Cause, we'd make the mon.'

"However, maybe Mary A—excuse me, Marion, can 'render us a selection.'"

"I'd propose to give a fair,
Boys can work and do their share,"

returned Marion, serenely, giggling at the howl of protest that arose from the boys.

Allan munched a bit of candy reflectively.

"But the boys say, 'Nay, nay, nay,
We'd far rather give a play,' "

he responded swiftly with a laughing glance in Marion's direction. "Hurry up, Don."

"Let's go berrying, I say,
Some fine morn at break of day,
Take along this happy bunch,
Big tin pails, and *lots* of lunch,"

Donald suggested, seating himself on the rail of the summer-house and whistling under his breath.

"All these suggestions sound grand," Dick said, "and it's up to us to carry them out. But how about the May Queen? Why are you so backward about coming forward, Woggsie, are you asleep?"

"Picnics morning, noon, and night,
I'd consider a delight,"

Polly Wiggles suggested stifling a yawn, while Kitty chimed in:

"Why not start a club? 'Twould be,
Lots of fun, as you'll agree."

"That would be lovely," chorused the girls, much pleased at the idea.

"Speak up, Hugh and Gay," ordered the Queen, giving Gabriel a nudge with her scepter. "You two are last."

"Why, I did give you a rhyme, don't you remember?" Gabriel protested in an injured tone.

"Not a good-time rhyme," Polly Wiggles objected decidedly. "Hurry up."

Gabriel pondered desperately.

> "I'd like to tramp around the lakes,
> And hunt for turtles, bugs, and snakes,"

he volunteered finally, looking thoroughly disgusted when the girls shrieked at the idea. "Now what's the matter with that, I'd like to know?"

"You have no tact, my son," Billy informed him. "Don't you know that such things offend their delicate sensibilities?"

Allan jumped up with determination in his eye. "Into the lake you go, Hugh," he cried grabbing his friend's auburn thatch of hair while Dick seized his feet and a laughing scuffle

started. "Do you mean to say that *Gay* can beat you at rhyming?"

"Ouch, let go. You've all talked so much that I haven't had a chance," Hugh excused himself, freeing his hair with a jerk, and searching his mind for an idea. "How's this?

"Some parties would be fun, I think,
With lots to eat and lots to drink!

"Now gimme another glass of punch."

"Oh, Hugh," protested Marion in disgust, "don't you ever think about anything but eating? Boys certainly are queer."

"Well, I think," Jeannette said, acting as peacemaker, "that we won't be able to complain of our good times being over, if all the lovely things happen this summer that we have suggested in our rhymes. Hark, Wiggles! Isn't that Mother calling?"

Sure enough, through the bower of bushes and shrubbery banking the terraces that sloped up to the house they could hear, "Elizabeth, Jeannette, it's time to say 'good-night.' "

"O dear! May Day is over," sighed the Queen, rising reluctantly.

"We must go, too," chorused the other girls, jumping to their feet regretfully, "but we've had a wonderful time."

Up the path they scampered, pausing at the corner of the big shadowy veranda where Mrs. MacAllister was swaying gently to and fro in a swinging chair, and she looked up with a smile at their approach.

"We don't know how to thank you," began Polly Wiggles gratefully, as she stooped to kiss the kind friend who had added so much pleasure to the May Day for them all.

"I don't want you to thank me," broke in Mrs. MacAllister, smiling at the circle of girlish faces. "I want you all to use the ponies and boats whenever you wish, and to play in the summer-houses any time. I just love to have a crowd of rollicking young people about, and so does Donald. You know I told Mrs. Eaton that I'd like to steal her daughters, and an even better plan would be to adopt you all," she finished jokingly.

"Yes, do," agreed Donald eagerly. "Adopt them as godsons and goddaughters."

"And we'll adopt you as our Fairy Godmother," Alice put in contentedly.

"I'll walk across the road with you," Donald said as the girls, arm in arm, skipped down the path between the silvery birch-trees, while the boys followed close behind. Over at The Lilacs the lanterns had been taken in and all signs of the revelry were over.

"It must be nine-thirty, for the band is playing 'Good Night, Ladies,' " yawned Jeannette as they paused at the gate. "How appropriate. Do sing!"

Up at The Lilacs Mrs. Eaton looked at Grandma Carr and smiled as the clear voices rang out in the song, followed by what the boys called "The Nightcap Chant," as shoulder to shoulder they tramped down the avenue behind the laughing girls.

"Good night, lovely maidens, we're grieving,
With sorrow there is no relieving,
But the hour is late,

Ere you give us the gate,
We think it is wise to be leaving,"

they chanted lustily.

As the last strains of the ridiculous song died away, only the rustling of the trees and the shrill piping of the crickets broke the stillness of the evening as Donald turned to go.

"See you to-morrow," he said, pausing with his hand on the gate to glance back over his shoulder, and Jeannette and Polly Wiggles standing with their arms about each other beneath the swaying lilac-bushes, waved "good-night."

THE END

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